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**THE ABSURDITY OF MODERATION IN WAR: IS MILITARY FORCE A CREDIBLE MEANS TO  
COMPEL UNITED STATES POLITICAL WILL IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY?**

**by**

**Mark Christopher Preston Ellwood MBE**

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by

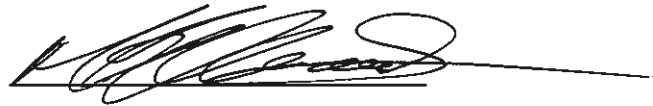
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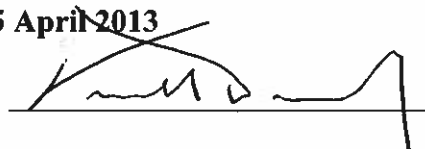
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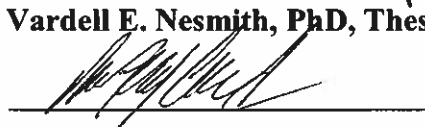
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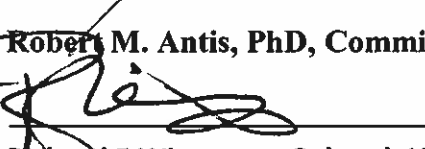
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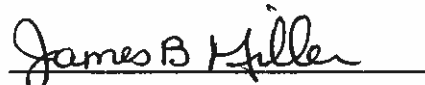
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## ABSTRACT

This study asserts that military force is losing its political utility due to the imposition of constraints resulting from the liberal values and associated tolerances of U.S. society. The cause of this situation is examined by investigating past political, military and social influences that have shaped the ways and means of military force and its perceived utility as a means to impose political ends. Reflecting the special nature of war's means relative to its political utility, Clausewitz believed that the introduction of "moderation into the theory of war itself, would always lead to logical absurdity."<sup>1</sup> Over the last decade however, U.S. strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan have exposed a failure to balance political aspirations with appropriate consideration of the second order effects of military action and distracted attention from the human nature of war. Though it may not be physically possible or indeed politically desirable to change the constraints under which military force currently operates, greater understanding and consideration of the resulting limitations and consequences will temper social and political expectation and ensure that the future demands of policy are socially and militarily acceptable, suitable and feasible.

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<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 76.

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## INTRODUCTION

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.<sup>1</sup>

Reflecting the special nature of war's means relative to its political utility, Clausewitz believed war to be "a continuation of political activity by other means"<sup>2</sup> and defined it as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will."<sup>3</sup> He further stated that it ought to end in a complete victory<sup>4</sup> and that "it would be futile - even wrong - to try to shut one's eyes to what war really is from sheer distress at its brutality."<sup>5</sup> He therefore concluded that the introduction of "moderation into the theory of war itself, would always lead to logical absurdity."<sup>6</sup> Relating directly, this paper's thesis asserts that military force is losing its political utility due to the imposition of "logically absurd" constraints resulting from the held liberal values and associated tolerances of United States (U.S.) society. However, these constraints are not the direct result of U.S social intolerance or even the nation's founding liberal values, but the indirect consequence of their influence on the historic evolution of the American way of warfare.

Over the last decade, U.S. strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan have arguably exposed a failure to temper political aspirations with appropriate consideration of the second and third order effects of military action. New challenges in the global security

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<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 88.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

environment, where safeguarding domestic legitimacy and acceptability, has become as much a prize as territory once was, are re-defining military responsibility and utility.<sup>7</sup> These political, legal, moral, ethical and fiscal considerations constrain the utility of military force as a political instrument of power. Put simply; do the same U.S. liberal values and sensitivities that often justify intervening military force, so constrain its subsequent use as to hazard the political objective unachievable? Though it may not be possible or indeed desirable to change the constraints under which military force operates, greater understanding of the impact will temper social and political expectation regarding the utility of military force as an element of national power. As Sun Tsu says, "know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril,"<sup>8</sup> but how well do we know ourselves?

Clausewitz's theories provide the overarching theoretical framework against which the thesis is analyzed. Though the contemporary context in which military force is employed today differs from that described by Clausewitz, he believed war to have two enduring components, the constant nature and the evolving character. He considered "absolute war" to be a purely abstract notion as "real war" would be subject to and constrained by varying degrees of physical and political friction. The issue of concern therefore, is the extent to which the character of the contemporary operating environment constrains the use of military force to achieve national political objectives.

The paper initially examines the complexity of balancing national security

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<sup>7</sup> Sharpe OBE, Brigadier A R D, "Conflict on Land: A Conceptual Description of the Land Operating Environment," In *Army Doctrine Publication: Army Doctrine Primer*, ed. Chief of the General Staff and Commander Force Development and Training (Shrivenham, Wiltshire: United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre, 2011), P1-P26.

<sup>8</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. Samuel B. Griffith (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 84.

requirements with the core liberal democratic values of self-determination and nonintervention. This is achieved by reviewing the principles on which the U.S. was founded and how tension between the “legitimacy politics” of international liberalism and the “power politics” of realism<sup>9</sup> continues to influence the design of U.S. strategy. Building on this political foundation, the paper then examines how the emergence of “American Exceptionalism,”<sup>10</sup> resulting from America’s geopolitical isolation in the nineteenth century, shaped the apolitical nature and absolutist character of the traditional American way of war and morally justified the U.S. military philosophy of seeking rapid and decisive military victory.

Forming the most extensive and discussion element of the paper, Chapter 4 highlights the principal influences that altered the traditional approach through the twentieth and early twenty-first century towards a more pragmatic modern way of war. The focus is the industrialization of warfare, the growth of isolationism, the resurgence of the primacy of policy, the strategic influence of the Vietnam experience, the effect of Cold War conventional military mobilization, the heralded technological Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)”<sup>11</sup> and the strategic shock of the 11 September 2001 attacks.

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<sup>9</sup> “In the realm of legitimacy politics, liberal internationalism holds that two fundamental norms of the global system should be self-determination and non-intervention. ... In the realm of power politics, realism holds that nations must be guided by considerations of power as well as morality. In a system of sovereign states, lasting peace can be established by several means, including the domination of one power, shifting alliances, or the collaboration of all major powers.” Michael Lind, *The American Way of Strategy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 23

<sup>10</sup> American Exceptionalism – “a belief in the uniqueness of the American experiment and its importance as an example to the rest of mankind. ... the American colonies were seen as defenders of republican virtues and ideals, as guardians of the ‘sacred flame of liberty’.” Benjamin Buley, *The New American Way of War: Military Culture and the Political Utility of Force* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 24-25.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Krepinevich defines a RMA as when the application of new technologies into a significant number of military systems combines with innovative operational concepts and organizational adaptation in a way that fundamentally alters the character and conduct of a conflict. Andrew F. Krepinevich, “Cavalry to Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions,” *National Interest*, no. 37 (Fall 1994): 30.

## CHAPTER 1: MILITARY THEORY FOUNDATION

That wise Prussian, Karl von Clausewitz was an awakening for me.  
His “On War,”...was like a beam of light from the past, still  
illuminating present-day quandaries.<sup>1</sup>

Colin Powell provides credible endorsement of the continued relevance of Clausewitz’s theories as the framework for subsequent analysis, but the principal reason for his use is that his standard was strategic effectiveness. He recognized warfare as a unique human activity and thus he analyzed it within the military, political and social contexts. There are however, some difficulties in asserting firm conclusions from “*On War*” due to the fact that it was incomplete at the time of his death and because of its dialectic structure. Indeed, Clausewitz himself remarked that, “if an early death should terminate my work, what I have written so far would....only deserve to be called a shapeless mass of ideas...liable to endless misinterpretation...the target of much half-baked criticism.”<sup>2</sup> For this reason, emphasis will be placed on the enduring themes relating to the nature of war drawn from Book One: the definition of war, the primacy of policy and the Remarkable Trinity.

Analysis of Clausewitz’s theories requires the use of the commonly used yet frequently misunderstood terms such as war, warfare and strategy. That the meanings today differ in character and context to those of the early nineteenth century is worthy of note, as it can often lead to false or misinterpreted conclusions. However, to claim obsolescence of the work purely for reasons of outdated context would be shortsighted as

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<sup>1</sup> Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 207.

<sup>2</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, “Note of 10 Jul 1827,” In *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 70.

the books were never intended to be used as prescriptive approaches to warfare, but as timeless descriptive theories capturing the nature and human dynamic of warfare.

### **What is War?**

The current United States of America (U.S.) military definition of war, states that “war is socially sanctioned violence to achieve a political purpose. In its essence, war is a violent clash of wills. War is a complex, human undertaking that does not respond to deterministic rules.”<sup>3</sup> The critical elements of this definition therefore, are that it is a socially sanctioned complex human endeavor involving a violent clash of wills for political purpose. Clausewitz deliberately does not provide a single comparable journalistic definition of war, but devotes the entire first chapter of Book One to a dialectic exposition of what war is. By following the logical development of Clausewitz’s concept formulation, the critical elements of the U.S. definition of war can be substantiated.

### **War is a Violent Clash of Wills**

Initially Clausewitz provides a succinct definition, describing war simply as “an act of [physical] force to compel our enemy to do our will.”<sup>4</sup> From this he asserts the ‘means’ to be physical force, the ‘object’ the imposition of one’s will onto the enemy and concludes the ‘aim’ as rendering the enemy powerless to secure the object:

If the enemy is to be coerced you must put him in a situation that is even more unpleasant than the sacrifice you call on him to make...you must

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication 1 (Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 20 2009), preface.

<sup>4</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 75.

make him literally defenseless or at least put him in a position that makes this danger probable<sup>5</sup>

Clausewitz's description of war as the product of both a trial of strength and a clash of wills is therefore consistent with the current U.S. doctrinal definition.

### War is a Complex, Human Undertaking

Clausewitz discusses war in two distinct forms, the abstract "absolute war" and the true "real war." "Absolute war" emphasizes war's tendency to escalate to extremes due to reciprocal action between opponents. "War is an act of force and there is no limit to the application of that force. Each side therefore, compels its opponent to follow suit; a reciprocal action is started which must lead, in theory, to extremes."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, if divorced from wider political or social constraints, there is no logical limit to the force each side will employ even if one side wishes to pursue only limited objectives. However, Clausewitz further believed that "war is never an isolated act."<sup>7</sup> "Real war" therefore, takes account of the rational human dynamic that constrains such extreme escalation of violence irrespective of whether the war is total, limited, regular or irregular.

### War is Socially Sanctioned Violence to Achieve a Political Purpose

Having demonstrated that "absolute war" failed to take account of political influences, Clausewitz further concluded that "if...war springs from some political purpose, it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 80.



consideration in conducting it.”<sup>8</sup> The primacy of policy is often misrepresented by the frequent use of the seemingly contradictory title heading that follows: “War is a mere continuation of policy by other means.”<sup>9</sup> This has led to two common misunderstandings: first, that there is a point at which policy, as politics and diplomacy, stops and war commences and second, that the political and military objectives are identical.<sup>10</sup> Clausewitz later addresses both these issues by stating that,

War is *not* merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse carried on *with* other means. What remains peculiar to war is simply the peculiar nature of its means....the political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.<sup>11</sup>

The key point relating to the thesis of this study is that politics and war are parallel activities with wholly related yet separate objectives. However, engagement in conflict could be less discretionary than expected, so whilst war remains its extension, policy may indeed be driven by the unexpected turns and consequences of war.

### **Ein Wunderliche Dreifaltigkeit – A Remarkable Trinity**

The “Remarkable Trinity” concludes Clausewitz’s first chapter. As previously stated, Clausewitz deliberately did not “begin [Chapter 1 of Book 1] by offering a crude, journalistic definition of war”<sup>12</sup> but instead, presented a dialectic appreciation of the nature of war. Therefore, as the chapter’s conclusion, the Trinity could be considered Clausewitz’s most complete definition of war:

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 58.

<sup>11</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 75.

War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a remarkable trinity – composed of (1) primordial violence, hatred and enmity, which are regarded as a blind natural force; of the (2) play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and (3) of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.<sup>13</sup>

Had Clausewitz concluded with this description of the elements of the Trinity, much of the current debate as to its continued relevance would have been averted. By presumably attempting to add further clarity by associating the descriptive elements with the representative bodies of the “people,” the “military” and the “government”<sup>14</sup>, he introduced a far too literal secondary set of elements that confused his basic message. Christopher Bassford contends that interpretations of the Trinity merely as the people, military and government in balance, has derived a highly prescriptive, positive doctrine that is at odds with Clausewitz’s descriptive approach to theory.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the critical message of the Trinity is that the relationship of the three tendencies is both ever present and yet inherently unstable.<sup>16</sup> This argument is persuasive if one considers how the three tendencies – emotion, chance and reason - can to some extent affect each of the representative bodies. The utility of military force can therefore only be truly assessed by considering the dynamic relationship the three elements of the Trinity have to one another.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>14</sup> “The first of these three aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government.” Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Bassford, “The Primacy of Policy and the ‘Trinity’ in Clausewitz’s Mature Thought,” In *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Hew Strachan and Andreas Herberg-Roth, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 80.

<sup>16</sup> “These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless. *Our task therefore is to develop a theory that maintains a balance between these three tendencies, like an object suspended between three magnets.*” Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

## The Nature and Character of War

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the salient aspects of Clausewitz's theories relating to the nature and character of conflict as the framework for subsequent analysis. However, periods of great historic change have led some military theorists to assert revolutions that claim not only to transform the character but the very nature of war. For example, the post-Cold War era inspired authors such as Martin van Creveld,<sup>17</sup> Mary Kaldor,<sup>18</sup> General Sir Rupert Smith<sup>19</sup> and John Keegan<sup>20</sup> to challenge the currency of Clausewitz's theories. Whilst these arguments provide valuable reference, they tend to emphasize change over continuity and thus potentially ignore the constant human nature of warfare. The nature cannot change; otherwise, by definition, it would cease to be war. Therefore none of these counterarguments definitively challenge Clausewitz's basic concept of war. Rather, they merely offer alternative perspectives based on differing interpretations of Clausewitz's work. However, these counter arguments are not dismissed entirely, as each provides valuable contribution to the broader debate relating to the functional utility of military force.

The timeless synthesis of experience and thought that Clausewitz offers, if considered in its historic context, remains as relevant today as it ever was. The abstract "absolute war" versus the constrained "real war," the primacy of policy and the Remarkable Trinity each provide a rich framework against which to assess the use of military force as an element of national power. By accepting Clausewitz's Trinity as "all

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War: Lessons of Combat, from the Marne to Iraq* (New York: Presidio Press, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Mary Kaldor, *New & Old Wars* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force*.

<sup>20</sup> John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

inclusive and universal, comprising the subjective and the objective, the intellectual, the emotional and the physical components that constitute the phenomenon of war in any human construct,”<sup>21</sup> the assumption is drawn that warfare remains subject to both the strengths and frailties of human nature. By extension therefore, it can be concluded that the nature of war does not change, even if its character does and continues to do so. War therefore, remains “an inherently confrontational, volatile, chaotic and violent contest influenced by a mixture of risk, chance and unintended consequences; an extension of politics in a dynamic triangular relationship between emotion, chance and reason.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Christopher Bassford, "The Primacy of Policy and the 'Trinity' in Clausewitz's Mature Thought," 90.

<sup>22</sup> Sharpe OBE, Brigadier A R D, “Conflict on Land,” P4.

## CHAPTER 2: U.S. POLITICAL FOUNDATION

If a nation values anything more than freedom, it will lose its freedom, and the irony of it is that if it is comfort or money that it values more, it will lose that too.<sup>1</sup>

The previous chapter established the importance of the dynamic triangular relationship of emotion, chance and reason and defined military force as an extension of policy, described by Clausewitz as “representative of all interests of the community.”<sup>2</sup> However, recognizing policy as purely unifying and reconciling is perhaps overly simplistic as it can often be equally divisive and antagonizing, even under authoritarian regimes as in Clausewitz’s day. Policy was then, and will continue to be frequently and fiercely contested by elements of the population with differing values and interests.<sup>3</sup> This chapter will therefore investigate the political dichotomy of seeking to protect a liberal democratic tradition from threat whilst attempting to preserve the associated core values of self-determination and nonintervention.<sup>4</sup>

### Constitutional Founding Narrative

That the highest published strategy in the United States of America (U.S.) is a

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<sup>1</sup> W. Somerset Maugham, *Strictly Personal* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran and Co, 1941), Ch 31.

<sup>2</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 607.

<sup>3</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria II, "What is Wrong with the American Way of War?" *Prism* 3, no. 4 (September 2012): 112.

<sup>4</sup> “Self-determination means that a state is legitimate only if it rests on the consent of the people. ...Non-intervention means that no state can concour or subvert another; with few exceptions, legitimate warfare is limited to self-defence.” Michael Lind, *The American Way of Strategy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 23.

security strategy<sup>5</sup> presupposes the preservation of an extant overarching grand strategy or motivating philosophy. U.S., grand strategy and political ideology devolve from the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Together, they define both the philosophy and the legal foundation of governance as reinforced in the President's preface to the 2010 National Security Strategy:

In all that we do, we will advocate for and advance the basic rights upon which our Nation was founded. . . . From the birth of our liberty, America has had a faith in the future – a belief that where we're going is better than where we've been, even when the path ahead is uncertain. To fulfill that promise, generations of Americans have built upon the foundations of our fore fathers – finding opportunity, fighting injustice, and forging a more perfect Union.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, Michael Lind believes the very purpose of “American strategy has always been to defend the American way of life.”<sup>7</sup> What therefore, constitutes the American way of life? Rather surprisingly, Lind fails to explicitly define the focus of his thesis, perhaps reflecting its essentially individualistic nature. Instead, he stresses the importance of preserving a free society founded on the dignity and worth of the individual.<sup>8</sup> From this, it can therefore be concluded that the essence of the American way of life is less about what it is, but more about the freedom for individual citizens to determine whatever they might indeed wish it to be.

As the supreme authority of the country, the US Constitution not only establishes the foundations of governance and law of the land but together with the Declaration of Independence, defines the ethos and motivation of the Union/nation itself. It has no equal and though it was written over two hundred years ago, it remains the overarching basis of

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. President, *National Security Strategy* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, May 2010), preface.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, ii – iii.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Lind, *The American Way of Strategy*, 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

governance in the U.S. to this day. It is therefore as important to understand what these documents mean to U.S. citizens as to the specifics of their contents.

Though ethnically and culturally diverse, the U.S. was formed on a unique common vision of independence and unity. Not all of the founding States held identical views but common to all the colonists was the “rich backdrop of Western civilization, European Enlightenment, as well as English common law and political theory.”<sup>9</sup> This alone may not have been sufficient to unify the developing nation, but the common threat of oppression at the hands of competing imperial European powers provided additional motivation for independence and thus developed a common sense of unity through adversity.

Considering their importance, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution in particular, are remarkably brief, though brevity is perhaps their strength. It allows for clear unambiguous authority of the founding principles to remain at the heart of current policy and legislation. Their modern applicability is a matter of frequent domestic political and legal debate, but whether they continue to hold preeminent statutory status or not is largely academic as the principles contained in both documents are now culturally enshrined in the held liberal values and tolerances of the free society they helped to establish. They provide the “essential and effective foundation of America’s grand strategy,”<sup>10</sup> and will, for the foreseeable future at least, continue to succinctly encapsulate and define the very understanding of what it means to be American.

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel L. Waters, "American Grand Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Historical Strategy to Balance Liberty and Order" (Master's thesis, National Defense University, Joint Advanced Warfighting School, 2012), 49.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 58.

## **Realism versus Liberalism – The American Liberal Democratic Tradition**

The previous section described U.S. grand strategy as securing and enhancing the conditions necessary to preserve the American way of life. To achieve this, U.S. strategy must not only protect the American people from physical harm, but also prevent competitive imperial or militarist states from threatening U.S. interests by disrupting the international system through anarchy.<sup>11</sup> This highlights the inherent strategic tension between the competing needs of physical security versus the held liberal principles of self-determination and non-intervention. Therefore, American strategy must seek ways to defend the American way of life through means that do not endanger the American way of life. However, political opinion on how best to achieve this delicate balance is divided between those who advocate for the legitimacy politics of liberalism and those who advocate for the power politics of realism.<sup>12</sup>

U.S. political liberalism and realism tend to be far less abstract or ideological than the opposing ethical philosophies from which they originate as each persuasion remains largely subordinate to the morality of the U.S. liberal tradition; “the vital center of American politics.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, it is so ingrained in U.S. political culture as to be bipartisan:

Americans have never accepted the principles of Europe’s old order, never embraced the Machiavellian perspective. The United States is a liberal, progressive society through and through, and to the extent that Americans

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<sup>11</sup> Lind, *The American Way of Strategy*, 22.

<sup>12</sup> “In the realm of legitimacy politics, liberal internationalism holds that two fundamental norms of the global system should be self-determination and non-intervention. ... In the realm of power politics, realism holds that nations must be guided by considerations of power as well as morality. In a system of sovereign states, lasting peace can be established by several means, including the domination of one power, shifting alliances, or the collaboration of all major powers.” *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Michael C. Desch, “Hartz, Huntington, and the Liberal Tradition in America: The Clash with Military Realism,” in *American Civil Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed. Suzanne C. Nielsen and Don M. Snider (Baltimore: John Hopkins university press, 2009), 93.



believe in power, they believe it must be a means of advancing the principles of a civilization and liberal world order.<sup>14</sup>

U.S. strategy therefore, is often the result of a pragmatic synthesis of liberalism and realism rather than a balance of competing opposites; an example perhaps, of Clausewitz's "real" versus "absolute" within the modern political context. As National Security Adviser to President George W. Bush, Condoleezza Rice succinctly described the Bush doctrine as an amalgam of pragmatic realism and Wilsonian liberal theory.

### Realism

Realism, as the name suggests, purports to reflect the world as it is rather than as it would, could or should be. It is founded on the premise that the international system is anarchic due to the absence of effective global authorities and/or interests able to regulate and protect all actors within it.<sup>15</sup> "At realism's core is the belief that international affairs are a struggle for power among self-interested states."<sup>16</sup> In this sense, power should be thought of in the Clausewitzian sense - the ability of one state actor to impose its will on another.

Realists tend to emphasize a more pessimistic outlook than others, claiming to provide the antidote to a naïve belief in the ability of international institutions and law to preserve peace.<sup>17</sup> It is perhaps easy to understand why Samuel P Huntington characterized it as a conservative philosophy predominantly held by the military

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review*, no. 113 (June/July 2002): 11.

<sup>15</sup> David Whetham, "The Challenge of Ethical Relativism in a Coalition Environment," *Journal of Military Ethics* 7, no. 4 (December 2008): 30.

<sup>16</sup> Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy*, no. 145 (2004), 55.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

leadership.<sup>18</sup> However, the modern realist school rose to prominence in academic and political circles in the aftermath of World War II and throughout the Cold War when the U.S faced the direct and existential threat of the Soviet Union.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of an increasingly globalized interdependent world order, it is questionable whether the era of interstate power politics is over, and with it the need for realism. Indeed, General Rupert Smith contends that, “war as a battle in a field between men and machinery, war as a massive deciding event in a dispute in international affairs...no longer exists.”<sup>19</sup> Whilst many contest this rather emphatic claim, there is some logic to the argument based on the historic precedence of the past three decades. However, realists might equally argue that the relative security provided by the growth of global economic interdependence was only made possible by the threat or actual limited use of U.S. military power.

The majority of Americans believe not only in the “perfectibility of man and peaceful coexistence, but also in the necessity of power to regulate a world still far from perfection,” and thus remain realists in the limited sense.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, there may yet be a resurgence of realism as emerging powers such as Russia, China, India and Brazil either directly compete for or indirectly threaten U.S. national interests. The implication for the potential use of military force is thus brought into question as its utility directly correlates to the perceived importance of the political purpose: “The more modest your own political aim, the less importance you attach to it and the less reluctantly you will

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<sup>18</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State; the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957).

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Kagan, “Power and Weakness,” 26.

abandon it.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, it is reasonable to deduce that a realist based political purpose will be more directly related to national interest and legitimized as such. Therefore, should military force be required, the ends will likely be focused on the achievement of direct coercion or deterrence; a task for which it is well suited. However, the scale and freedoms relating to the application of such military force, cannot be similarly determined by the ideological school from which the political decision originated, realist or otherwise. Rather, proportionality will be determined by the perceived importance of the interest at stake and the concomitant level of resolve invested in its security.

### Liberalism

As previously stated, liberalism forms the philosophical foundation to which the U.S. is inextricably wedded. Traditional American liberalism, as it was established by the Founding Fathers, was an amalgamation of the republican governance models of ancient Greece and Rome blended with the idea of natural individual rights; a legacy of medieval and protestant thought espoused by seventeenth century English thinkers such as John Locke.<sup>22</sup> However, political liberalism should be considered as a broad family of three differing theories.<sup>23</sup> The first argues that economic interdependence will discourage states from using force against each other due to the potential threat to each side’s prosperity. The second, most associated with President Woodrow Wilson, emphasizes the spread of democracy, based on a belief that democratic states are inherently more peaceful than authoritarian states. The third emphasizes the role of international

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<sup>21</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 81.

<sup>22</sup> Lind, *The American Way of Strategy*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision : Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 2010), 39.

institutions and organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Monetary Fund as means to encourage states to forego immediate gains for greater long term benefits brought by enduring global cooperation.<sup>24</sup> Though the emphasis differs, all three theories support the common liberal belief in the benefit of international cooperation versus the essentially blunt confrontational power play of realism.

The strength of the liberal argument is seemingly reinforced by the generalization that democratic states rarely if ever go to war with one another: "The absence of war between democracies comes as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations."<sup>25</sup> To be truly successful however, liberalism requires potential competitor states to voluntarily cooperate and is therefore often criticized for striving toward an unachievable global utopia. Though such an idealistic vision is indeed unlikely to be fully realized, the interdependence and subsequent economic growth of the Western industrial nations throughout the latter half of the twentieth century offers compelling empirical evidence of its efficacy.

The concept of cooperating for mutual benefit predates the Westphalia state structure. It is a basic human instinct, the product of thousands of years of evolution. It drove humans to form tribes and for those tribes to form partnerships with other tribes to counter common threats or to induce betterment. However, this instinct is itself influenced by other inherent physical and social human needs. In Maslow's famous model, the relative importance of human need alters according to circumstance in a prioritized ascending structure. Therefore, for any action of cooperation to be successful

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy*, no. 110 (1998): 32.

<sup>25</sup> Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," In *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg, Theodore K. Rabb, and Robert Gilpin (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 88.

it must be grounded in mutual self-interest. In this regard, though the ways and the means may differ, both liberalism and realism share common ends. Therefore, rather than considering realism and liberalism as polar opposites, they might more accurately be thought of as alternate ways to achieve common ends.

The complex paradoxical relationship between virtue and self-interest has led to certain liberalists to believe in the pursuit of a more radical proactive approach. Believing the liberal principles to be self-evident, they regard uncooperative states or those with different opinions with deep mistrust verging on hostility.<sup>26</sup> This belief has developed into two, relatively illiberal, interventionist schools of thought, Liberal Imperialism and Neo-conservatism. The latter of these two, associated with the President George W Bush administration, is perhaps the most interesting as it succinctly demonstrates the merging of realism and liberalism. Though the ideological and ethical foundation of neo-conservatism is rooted in the liberal tradition, the ways and means by which it seeks to achieve its ends, extending where necessary to the pre-emptive use of coercive expeditionary military force, is a practice more commonly associated with the power politics of realism.

### **The Political Tension**

Famed military theorist Samuel P Huntington questioned whether the U.S could sustain and preserve a democratically appropriate military to fulfill the “societal imperative”<sup>27</sup> and yet at the same time be militarily effective, fulfilling the “functional

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<sup>26</sup> Desch, “Hartz, Huntington, and the Liberal Tradition in America,” 94-95.

<sup>27</sup> “Conformity of the professional military with the liberal American social and ideological order.” Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 2.

imperative.”<sup>28</sup> He believed that an ideological tension existed between America’s predominantly liberal society and the predominantly realist U.S. military leadership.<sup>29</sup> Due to the focus of his book, Huntington perhaps oversimplified the opposing framework of these two political traditions by labeling them and thus exclusively associating them, with “military” and “Civil” prefixes, in much the same way that Clausewitz confused his Trinity by transposing it onto the people, the military and the government. By addressing them in in such fixed terms to support the thesis of his book, he understated how the relative influence of liberalism and realism alters according to context across all elements of society. However, Huntington did recognize that “the degree to which [the functional and societal imperatives] conflict, depends upon the intensity of the security needs and the nature and strength of the value pattern of society.”<sup>30</sup>

This chapter examined the foundations on which U.S strategy is formulated and highlighted the inherent political tensions that influence the formulation of policy. The tension between physical security and the freedoms implicit to the American way of life relates directly to the degree to which military force and the liberal values and associated tolerances of American society conflict. The means by which the common goal of securing the American way of life is pursued therefore, whether through liberalism or realism, is principally dependent on how the need relates to the strength of will. As such the political acceptability, suitability and feasibility of military force will alter according to the intensity of the security needs and the nature and strength of the value pattern of society.

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<sup>28</sup> “Effectiveness in war making and deterrence.” Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 83-85.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 2.

### CHAPTER 3: THE TRADITIONAL AMERICAN WAY OF WAR

Once war is forced upon us, there is no alternative but to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision. In war there is no substitute for victory.<sup>1</sup>

The previous chapter examined the foundations of American policy and highlighted the inherent political tensions that influence the formulation of policy relative to the use of military force. This chapter will build on this foundation by reviewing the dominant political, military and societal factors that shaped the evolution of the traditional American approach to warfare. It examines how republicanism, "American Exceptionalism"<sup>2</sup> and America's physical and geopolitical isolation led to a rejection of the European model, where military force was used as an instrument of imperial policing and great power rivalry,<sup>3</sup> for a more apolitical military approach that sought rapid and absolute victory.

General McArthur's famous quote above epitomizes the traditional American approach to warfare through the twentieth century but the origins date back to the nineteenth century. It is characterized by a doctrinal reliance on the mustering and application of an overwhelming margin of superiority through which opponents are annihilated. This is not at all unique, but what makes the traditional American approach distinctive from the European model is its rejection of Clausewitz's belief in the

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<sup>1</sup> General Douglas McArthur, in a speech to Congress in 1952 after his relief by president Truman in 1952. Cited in, Suzanne C. Nielsen and Don M. Snider, *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>2</sup> American Exceptionalism – "A belief in the uniqueness of the American experiment and its importance as an example to the rest of mankind. ... the American colonies were seen as defenders of republican virtues and ideals, as guardians of the 'sacred flame of liberty'." Benjamin Buley, *The New American Way of War: Military Culture and the Political Utility of Force* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 24-25.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy review*, no. 113 (June/July 2002): 11.

centrality of policy in war: “Policy will permeate all military operations, and, in so far as their violent nature will admit, ... leave a continuous influence on them.”<sup>4</sup> It is however, consistent with Sun Tzu, who argued that whilst the decision to go to war must be a political decision, the general must be free to act autonomously once that decision had been made.<sup>5</sup> Russell F Weigley, who popularized the term “the American way of war,” believed this apolitical approach led American military strategists to give “little regard to the non-military consequences of what they were doing.”<sup>6</sup>

### **American Exceptionalism and Absolutism**

The traditional American way of war is defined by its apolitical nature and its absolutist character. Each is mutually supporting as the apolitical nature undoubtedly exacerbates the absolutist character. From the moment European colonists first established themselves in North America, they were involved in a struggle for their very survival. Wars were traditionally regarded as carefully regulated affairs between professional armies pursuing ends of limited dynastic advantage, but the situation in which the colonists found themselves in was as alien to them as their indigenous adversaries. Due to cultural incompatibility with the indigenous people and the existential nature of the threat they presented, the validity of the cause was perceived to be absolute so they defended themselves with little regard for restraint. The resulting wars frequently disregarded European restrictions relating to attacks on property and non-combatants and thus the “seventeenth and eighteenth century Americans came to

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<sup>4</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 87-88.

<sup>5</sup> SunTzu, *The Art of War*, ed. Samuel B. Griffith (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), xviii-xix.



conceive of war in more absolute terms that did their European contemporaries.”<sup>7</sup>

Though the early Indian Wars may have established a culture of absolutism, the Revolutionary War, despite its obvious emotional motivations, did not pursue similar absolute ends. Principally this was due to the pragmatic leadership of General George Washington who nurtured the emerging belief in American Exceptionalism to further the republican cause:

Washington’s insistence on creating a European-style professional army to wage war in the European pattern reflected his apparent fear of the tendency of irregular war, with its violations of the international rules of war, to tear apart the entire social contract, as well as his specific concern to guard the dignity of the American cause as an essential part of the new nation’s claim to equality of status among the nations of the world.<sup>8</sup>

Recognizing the significant asymmetry of the fledgling Continental Army relative to the British military, Washington sought to avoid general actions wherever possible to keep his army and thus the revolution alive. He therefore adopted an attritional approach by attacking the British will to persist by conducting aggressive yet limited raids. With French assistance, Washington was ultimately successful. The doctrine of attrition was thus established in American military culture and was again adopted during the subsequent war of 1812.

The War of 1812 or more specifically, the signing of the Treaty of Ghent on 24 December 1814 dramatically altered the American understanding of the relationship between war and politics and shifted the political and military strategic focus from defense to security. Prior to the war, the newly formed Republic had endured a protracted period of insecurity but the failure of the British invasion demonstrated the

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<sup>7</sup> Russell F. Weigley, "American Strategy from its Beginnings through the First World War," In *Makers of Modern Strategy : From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, Gordon Alexander Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 409.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 412.

unprecedented degree of security provided by North America's physical and political isolation. The unique nature of America's relative security was a blessing to the cause of American Exceptionalism. Thomas Jefferson noted that the United States of America (U.S.) was "separated by nature and a wide ocean from the exterminating havoc of one quarter of the globe [Europe]."<sup>9</sup> Rather prophetically, Lincoln also perceived that only Americans could destroy the U.S.: "Shall we expect some transatlantic military giant to step the ocean, and crush us at a blow? Never! ...If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher."<sup>10</sup>

The seed corn of absolutism, having lain dormant since the days of colonization, re-emerged during this period due to the dominant liberal republican political culture combined with a military culture shaped by a long period of assumed security. Coupled with a "rapid rise from poverty of resources to plenty," the further evolution of strategies of attrition was cut short in favor of one-dimensional military strategies of annihilation.<sup>11</sup> As national security was assumed to be the starting point of political discourse rather than the end result of conscious policy, "the isolation of the U.S. from world politics in the nineteenth-century reinforced the dominance of liberalism."<sup>12</sup> As a result, national strategic objectives were increasingly defined in terms of sociopolitical ideals, reinforcing the belief in American Exceptionalism, and with it a tendency toward an absolutist approach to war:

The American tends to be an extremist on the subject of war: he either embraces war completely or rejects it completely. This extremism is

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Jefferson, cited in Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 23.

<sup>10</sup> President Lincoln cited in *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria II, "What is Wrong with the American Way of War?" *Prism* 3, no. 4 (September 2012): 109.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State; the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 145.

required by the nature of the liberal ideology. Since liberalism deprecates the moral validity of the interests of the state in security, war must be either condemned as incompatible with liberal goals or justified as an ideological movement in support of those goals.<sup>13</sup>

Huntington's realist bias should of course be considered, but in this case his argument is supported by George Washington who, in his Farewell Address, stated that "[America's] detached and distant situation afforded the United States the luxury of pursuing a different course to that of Europe, avoiding the morally compromising ordinary vicissitudes and combination of European friendships and enmities."<sup>14</sup> Henry Kissinger adds further weight to Huntington's argument by claiming that "Americans had confused the security conferred by two great oceans with the normal pattern of international relations. ... Americans came to develop a purist and abstract doctrine of aggression: they either waged war all out, with crusading moralistic fervor, or they did not wage war at all."<sup>15</sup>

### **War as the Failure of Politics**

The previous section described the social and political factors that set the condition for the traditional American way of war, but it was the American Civil War that ultimately defined it. The Civil War experience enshrined in American military culture a rejection of Clausewitz's notion of the primacy of policy in war. President Lincoln was determined to fight in as humane and conciliatory a manner as possible but by 1862, even he had realized the extent of the bloodshed required to bring the war to conclusion: "No general yet found can face the arithmetic, but the end of the war will be at hand when he

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>14</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Published for the Council on Foreign Relations by Harper, 1957), chapter 1.

shall be discovered.”<sup>16</sup> As Lincoln is regarded by many to represent the very embodiment of a war fighting political leader, it is interesting therefore that he, of all people, recognized war’s innate tendency to gather its own momentum and resist attempts to subject it to political limits and rational constraints. War was thus perceived to be the result of a failure of politics and diplomacy and therefore its conduct was regarded as the realm of the military commander resulting in a more apolitical and utilitarian approach to war.

This notion is perhaps best illustrated by General William Sherman’s famous statement that “War is Hell.” This phrase is most often associated with its moral connotations, but it also reflects the difficulty of subordinating the chaos of war to any political objective other than unconditional surrender of the enemy.<sup>17</sup> The comment reflects General Sherman’s experience during the Civil War and in particular, his controversial “march to the sea” during which he not only attacked the Confederacy’s resources but also targeted the hearts and minds of civilians through a deliberate strategy of terror.<sup>18</sup> In response to General Hood’s plea for restraint, Sherman replied, “War is cruelty and you cannot refine it ...those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out.”<sup>19</sup> Not only does this more complete quote capture the unrefined nature and cruelty of war as previously noted, but it also consciously blames the enemy for bringing it, reflecting the almost crusading liberal foundation of American Exceptionalism.

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<sup>16</sup> William E. Cain, "Lincoln in our Time," *Society* 46, no. 6 (2009): 541.

<sup>17</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 18.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas Wheeler, "Dying for 'Enduring Freedom': Accepting Responsibility for Civilian Casualties in the War Against Terrorism," *International Relations* 16, no. 2 (2002): 217.

Transferring the moral responsibility for the horrors of war onto the perceived unprovoked aggression of the enemy provides powerful moral justification to waging war at the highest possible intensity in order to finish it as quickly as possible. Michael Walzer named blaming your enemy for the cruelty of war as the “War is Hell” doctrine.<sup>20</sup> This sense of moral superiority is central to understanding how Americans perceive the recourse to military force even today. For example, the War is hell doctrine was used by Generals Curtis LeMay and Thomas Power<sup>21</sup> when justifying seemingly terrible strategic bombing campaigns during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. More recently, Secretary Rumsfeld used similar justification to counter criticism for Afghan civilian casualties in 2001: “We did not start this war. So understand, [the] responsibility for every single casualty in this war, whether they’re innocent Afghans or innocent Americans, rests at the feet of Al Qaeda and the Taliban.”<sup>22</sup>

The pursuit of rapid absolute victory was also reinforced by the structure of U.S military forces. The republican principles on which the U.S. was founded did not support a large standing professional military force and questioned the utility of military force for anything short of national crisis. Therefore, the characteristic compromise prior to the Cold War was to rely on modest standing forces in times of relative peace that would be supplemented with rapid and massive mobilization of citizen soldiers in times of emergency. However, reliance on civil mobilization starved the military of resources in peacetime and was susceptible to the fragility of popular support. The public was unlikely to tolerate mobilization for indefinite periods due to the competing needs of the

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 32.

<sup>21</sup> Commander of U.S. Strategic Air Command from 1957 to 1964.

<sup>22</sup> Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld, cited in Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 88.

communities from which the manpower was drawn and was also more likely to be sensitive to casualties. In Russell F Weigley's view, this was a significant part of the problem with the Vietnam War.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Enduring Legacy of the Traditional American Way of War**

The presumed security provided by America's unique physical and geopolitical isolation facilitated a growth in American Exceptionalism reflecting the republican desire to avoid all wars save those of national defense. Belief in the inherent pacifism of republican forms of government grew in the minds of the American people and acquired the status of national orthodoxy.<sup>24</sup> However, the sense of being a nation uniquely set apart physically and philosophically, permitted Americans to believe with crusading fervor, in their moral justification of war when threatened, and consequently to place less emphasis on the proportionality of their conduct in war. This is evidenced by President Franklin Roosevelt's declaration to the nation during World War II: "We must face the fact that modern warfare as conducted in the Nazi manner is a dirty business. We don't like it – we didn't want to get in it – but we are in it and we're going to fight it with everything we've got."<sup>25</sup>

The implication of the "war is hell" and the "no substitute for victory" discourse, relative to civil-military relations, is also stark. Policy and diplomacy was determined to be the responsibility of politicians while war, perceived to be the result of a failure of policy and diplomacy, was taken to be the realm of the military professional. This

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<sup>23</sup> Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> George E. Hopkins, "Bombing and the American Conscience during World War II," *The Historian* 28, no. 3 (1966): 463.

developed from a concern that the ambiguity and compromise of politics would serve no purpose other than to constrain the perceived greater moral obligation of the military commander to achieve total unconditional victory as efficiently and as rapidly as possible. Though technological advancement has since altered the means of warfare, the underpinning absolutist mindset that originated in the nineteenth century and dominated by the end of World War II remains an entrenched influence on American military culture to this day.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE MODERN WAY OF WAR**

The previous section outlined how the founding liberal values shaped the apolitical nature and absolutist character of the traditional American way of war and morally justified the United States of America (U.S.) military philosophy of seeking rapid and decisive military victory. This chapter highlights the principal influences that altered the traditional approach through the twentieth and early twenty first century towards a more pragmatic modern way of war. The discussion will focus on the industrialization of warfare, the growth of isolationism, the resurgence of the primacy of policy, the strategic influence of the Vietnam experience, the effect of Cold War conventional military mobilization, the heralded technological Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)<sup>1</sup> and the strategic shock of the 11 September 2001(9/11) attacks.

### **The Industrialization of War – The Science and Economy of Force**

Much of the current understanding of military force, operations and warfare stems from the development of interstate industrial warfare during the nineteenth century. It originated in Europe during the Napoleonic Wars and evolved throughout the century as its two crucial elements - states and industry - emerged and matured. The American Civil War, the German wars of unification, and the two World Wars all contributed, in their own way, to the development of the industrial war. Napoleon was perhaps the principal architect of industrial war by realizing what could be achieved with the massed strength

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<sup>1</sup> The application of new technologies into a significant number of military systems combined with innovative operational concepts and organizational adaptations that fundamentally alters the character and conduct of a conflict. Andrew F. Krepinevich, "Cavalry to Computer: The Pattern of Military Revolutions," *National Interest*, no. 37 (Fall 1994): 30.



of state. He successfully utilized technological advancements to enhance his military force and was thus able to break the political will of his opponents by dominating the trial of strength.<sup>2</sup>

The American Civil War was arguably the first major conflict to utilize the full power of a nation's industrial base to further the aims of war:

Lincoln understood the nature of total war. Harnessing the industrial and logistical superiority of the north to the cause, through the extensive network of railways, industrial output and conscription, he sought decisive victories that would be sufficient to break the South's will to resist.<sup>3</sup>

The Civil War was important because it exposed the utility of employing force beyond the battlefield. President Lincoln exploited the North's industrial superiority while simultaneously reducing the capacity of the Southern industrial base to sustain the Confederate war effort and reducing the strength of its Army through gradual attrition. The resulting loss of capacity forced the Confederacy to sue for peace. In so doing, he harnessed the people, industrially and through military conscription, to the political aim. The Civil War established a clear understanding of the importance of industrial capacity in deciding the outcome of war and thus the concept of seeking decisive defeat of the enemy by destroying his means to make war as being equal if not more important to scoring a decisive victory on the battlefield.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, industrial warfare came to be regarded less of a Napoleonic style art, but more of a scientific process of relative strength. However, Clausewitz emphasized the contextual dynamic between physical strength and moral will. He regarded their importance in equal measure, not as one over,

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<sup>2</sup> Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 88.

or in sequence to the other.<sup>5</sup> He further stressed that whilst physical strength can be scientifically measured with relative ease, the moral elements “will not yield to [such] academic wisdom. They cannot be classified or counted. They have to be seen or felt.”<sup>6</sup>

Though the Civil War had re-established a secure and prosperous nation of states unified by common republican liberal values, its industrial character had exacted a terrible human cost. Coupled with the republican political unease of maintaining a large standing military, the U.S. military and political leadership became increasingly concerned with American public resolve regarding war. Culturally, Americans were no more casualty averse than Europeans, but merely less persuaded generally by the need for expeditionary wars considering their relative isolation from the European imperial power struggles. However, this period was also marked by the emerging and opposing “Manifest Destiny” movement. It was as an early form of expansionist liberalism, similar to modern neo-conservatism, blended with a divine belief in American Exceptionalism. Though it never became a national priority, it resulted in a rapid expansion of U.S territory, most notably the annexation of Oregon and Texas, and was used by democrats to justify the war with Mexico. Despite the influence of Manifest Destiny, the Spanish- American War and the Philippine Insurrection that were principally fought to secure and advance national economic interests, by the beginning of the twentieth century international isolationism had re-emerged as the dominant political strategy.

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<sup>5</sup> “Destruction may be merely a means to some other end. In such a case, total destruction has ceased to be the point; the engagement is nothing but a *trial of strength*. In itself it is of no value; its outcome lies in the outcome of the trial.” “When we speak of destroying the enemy’s forces we must emphasize that nothing obliges us to limit this idea to the physical forces: the moral element must also be considered. The two interact throughout: they are inseparable.” Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 96-97.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 184

World War I epitomized the conflicting interests of the nation's leadership and its people. The American people were generally ambivalent to the war in Europe as they did not consider themselves in any danger from the Central Powers.<sup>7</sup> "For the U.S., wars were always 'over there' (in the words of the famous World War 1 song), and fought for second-order purposes – such as the restoration of the European balance of power, rather than the direct defense of the homeland."<sup>8</sup> However, President Wilson recognized the importance, not of the war itself, but the peace that would inevitably follow. He was a true believer in the validity of a progressive liberal world order based on equal opportunities of trade: "There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace."<sup>9</sup> Fearing that the U.S. would be unable to influence the peace talks in a meaningful way if it remained neutral, he argued for U.S. involvement in the war to further the longer term goal of establishing a more stable interdependent league of nations. However, despite attaining significant Congressional appropriations for the development of airplanes and approval for the War Department to mobilize an army for deployment to Europe on a voluntary basis, over reliance on civil mobilization had starved the military of resources in peacetime such that the country was woefully unprepared for war in 1917.<sup>10</sup> For the U.S., World War I was politically, socially and militarily inconclusive. Indeed, by 1937 seventy percent of

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<sup>7</sup> Michael D. Pearlman, *Warmaking and American Democracy: The Struggle Over Military Strategy, 1700 to the Present* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 191.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Buley, *The New American Way of War: Military Culture and the Political Utility of Force* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 49.

<sup>9</sup> Address of the President of the United States to the US Senate, January 22, 1917. Woodrow Wilson, *A Day of Dedication: The Essential Writings & Speeches of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Albert Fried (New York; London: Macmillan, 1965).

<sup>10</sup> "By July 1918, only 37 of the planned 22,000 airplanes were ready and the ground units lacked machine guns, field artillery pieces, rifles, medical supplies, winter uniforms, barracks and sufficient numbers of volunteers to meet the War Department's required force strength to conduct independent U.S. operations." Pearlman, *Warmaking and American Democracy*, 195.

American respondents to an opinion poll still felt that U.S. participation in the war had been a mistake and blamed President Wilson for involving the nation in European affairs and again resorted to a preference for isolationism.<sup>11</sup>

The political differences regarding the commitment of U.S. forces and the lack of preparedness reinforced the need for greater reliance on technological solutions to project military power. Facilitated by a rapidly growing economy, technological advancement was determined to offer an efficient way to wage war where only limited popular resolve existed. Thomas Edison, in a New York Times interview in 1915, captured the essence of the emerging desire to seek technological solutions. “The war of the future, that is, if the United States engages in it, will be war in which machines, not soldiers fight. ...machines should be invented to save the waste in men.”<sup>12</sup>

President Roosevelt recognized the potential economic and political threat posed by the totalitarian governments of Germany and Japan and the direct security threat posed by their advanced military technology. The geopolitical isolation that had dominated U.S. security strategy for the previous century could no longer be relied upon and therefore American involvement in World War II was largely unavoidable. Despite this inevitability, it was not readily appreciated as such by the majority of the American population. Therefore, before entering World War II, President Franklin D Roosevelt explained on 29 Dec 1940, during one of his more famous ‘fireside chats’ that,

We must have more ships, more guns, more planes – more of everything. ...we must be the great arsenal of democracy. The nations already fighting Hitler do not ask us to do their fighting. They ask us for the implements of war ...emphatically we must get these weapons to them in

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>12</sup> H. Bruce Franklin, *War Stars : The Superweapon and the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 72.

sufficient volume and quickly enough, so that we and our children will be saved the agony and suffering of war which others have had to endure.<sup>13</sup>

The “arsenal for democracy” policy attempted to balance the traditional absolutist desire for a rapid and decisive victory with the competing isolationist desire for limited involvement by maximizing the comparative strength of the U.S. industrial base while minimizing the potential for significant numbers of U.S. casualties. Arguably, the alternate motive was to expedite public support for U.S. involvement in a war the political leadership knew to be unpopular yet geopolitically necessary. However, this is perhaps an unfair assessment for two reasons. Firstly, the President was consistent in justifying American involvement on the threat to the American way of life:

No realistic American can expect from a dictator’s peace international generosity, or return of true independence, or world disarmament, or freedom of expression, or freedom of religion – or even good business. Such a peace would bring no security for us or for our neighbors. Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.<sup>14</sup>

And secondly, the President’s commitment to expend machines rather than men remained central to his war strategy even after U.S. involvement in the war was assured following the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. This is evident in his support for General George C. Marshall’s bold decision to maintain just ninety Army divisions vice the two hundred and fifteen<sup>15</sup> initially thought necessary to defeat both Germany and Japan. This rejection of simple mass of manpower sought to leverage U.S. industrial and technological advantage by maximizing mechanized mobility and air power.<sup>16</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 50.

<sup>14</sup> Annual Message to Congress, January 6, 1941. Franklin D. Roosevelt, *The Words that Reshaped America: F.D.R.*, ed. Stamford Parker (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 157-166.

<sup>15</sup> It is arguable that the initial assumptions regarding the true availability of manpower relative to the competing needs of manpower were inaccurate.

<sup>16</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 50.

degree to which the decision was influenced by political sensitivity resulting from the experiences of the Civil War and World War I is unclear, but in this instance, it proved to be as successful as it was courageous.

Following World War II, the emerging confrontation with the Soviet Union required the U.S. to maintain a large standing military in peacetime. Once again, the government and the military faced the dilemma of balancing the needs of national security with the social unpopularity of mass conscription and the associated constraints deriving from the casualty-averse and fickle U.S. liberal society.<sup>17</sup> Paul Nitze reflected his concern regarding the fragility of American resolve in the text of NSC-68:

The democratic way is harder than the authoritarian way. ...A free society is vulnerable in that it is easy for people to lapse into excesses – the excesses of a permanently open mind wishfully waiting for evidence that evil design may become noble purpose, the excess of faith become prejudice, the excess of tolerance degenerating into indulgence of conspiracy.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, technological force multipliers such as, nuclear weapons and air power continued to be relied upon to provide a surrogate for national will sufficient to maintain strategic U.S. supremacy for the least possible cost to U.S. human life.

### **The Legacy of the World Wars – The End of Interstate Industrial War?**

The two World Wars heavily influenced and advanced the American way of war by leveraging U.S. industrial and technological advantage to increase military capability and reduce the risks to deployed forces. However, they did not fundamentally alter the apolitical nature or absolutist character of the way America conducted war. Indeed, the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>18</sup> National Security Council, *NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programmes for National Security* (Washington DC: National Security Council, 14 April 1950).

experience of World War II merely advanced the means of war and in so doing cemented the absolutist mindset that subsequently dominated the Cold War period. World War II was a total war in every sense; the reciprocal advancement of industrial and technological capabilities reflected war's tendency towards extremes. The ultimate expression of which was the development and use of the atomic bombs against mainland Japan on 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> August 1945. The use of such brutal tactics was certainly controversial at the time but was nonetheless sanctioned by the military, the government and the people as a justifiable means to achieve desired political ends.

Whilst this level of violence may be difficult to comprehend today, it merely reflected the extreme social tolerances resulting from the significance of the threat. The threat to the civilian populations in Europe was direct and existential, and thus recourse to such extremes of violence could be considered entirely proportional. However, the physical threat to the civilian population of the U.S was far less severe, yet similar levels of violence were still sanctioned. That the U.S population accepted such extreme violence to defend the lives and liberty of its fellow citizens and allies by again transferring the moral responsibility onto the perceived unprovoked aggression of the enemy, provides clear evidence of an essentially apolitical and absolutist social culture that had evolved over the previous two centuries.

General Rupert Smith legitimately argues that “the paradigm of interstate industrial war was literally blown to pieces on 6 Aug 1945.”<sup>19</sup> Though many challenge his assertion, he offers a coherent argument that the industrial and technological innovation that brought industrial war into being had advanced to such an extent that “the people – massed in their cities; the source of manpower and industrial power...were now

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<sup>19</sup> Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 146.

the only target worth attacking.”<sup>20</sup> Atomic weapons of mass destruction, by directly targeting the cities themselves effectively bypassed the military forces that had hitherto been the representative embodiment of national power.

In this context it would seem reasonable to conclude that the political utility of conventional military force was at this point rendered obsolete. However, this assumes that all conflict will escalate to the level of total war, where the very survival of the nation is threatened and thus the resort to extreme measures is determined to be both acceptable and necessary. Clearly this is not the case as many limited conflicts involving industrial age conventional military forces have taken place since 1945. It is therefore perhaps more accurate to conclude that the development of nuclear weapons of mass destruction have only rendered *total* war, in a conventional industrial sense, obsolete. Conventional forces still have relevance where the conflict is limited. However, against a peer military force, where the likelihood of escalation to total war is possible, conventional industrial age military forces have less utility than the deterrent effect of mutually assured destruction. Smith’s “end of war” theory does not profess an end to armed conflict between states but rather, suggests a change in the political landscape that requires an alteration in the calibration of military means and political objectives as well as the kind of actors involved.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Legacy of the World Wars – Collective Security**

The World Wars witnessed an unprecedented escalation of violence that

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> C. Dandeker, "From Victory to Success - the Changing Mission of Western Armed Forces," In *Modern War and the Utility of Force: Challenges, Methods and Strategy*, ed. Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 21.



destroyed the power and influence of the European imperial states and enabled the U.S to emerge as the world's most powerful nation. The cost of war had far exceeded any perceived benefits and effectively ended the imperial model of waging interstate wars to achieve limited political objectives. Attention was therefore re-focused on the development of an effective collective international body to maintain peace and oversee the security of the world's nations.

Though President Wilson had been one of the principal proponents of collective security, he had failed to gain sufficient domestic support to join and thus influence the League of Nations in 1919. However, by 1945, eighty three percent of respondents to opinion surveys now believed it was "very important" for the U.S. to join an international organization "with police power to maintain world peace."<sup>22</sup> President Harry Truman was also supportive, as evidenced by the justification he gave in June 1950 to commit U.S. forces to the Korean peninsula, despite military advice to the contrary: "I believed in the League of Nations....It failed because we weren't in it to back it up. Okay, now we started the United Nations...and in this first big test we just couldn't let them down."<sup>23</sup>

The failure of the League of Nations to prevent World War II was considered by many to be indicative of its futility without U.S. participation. British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, believed it had failed because its basis was global rather than regional: "Only the countries whose interests were directly affected by a dispute ...could be expected to apply themselves with sufficient rigor to secure a settlement."<sup>24</sup> President

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<sup>22</sup> Pearlman, *Warmaking and American Democracy*, 219.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the U.N.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 72.

Franklin Roosevelt shared Churchill's regional preference but also believed in the importance of relative power,<sup>25</sup> as evidenced by his last State of the Union message on January 6, 1945, when the Charter of the United Nations (U.N.) was being drafted:

We cannot deny that power is a factor in world politics any more than we can deny its existence as a factor in national politics. But in a democratic world, as in a democratic nation, power must be linked with responsibility, and obliged to defend and justify itself within the framework of the general good.<sup>26</sup>

Both leaders agreed at the Allied summit meeting in Tehran in 1943 that the structure of the U.N. would be arranged regionally with the great power concert and the executive committee as two distinct entities; however, the outline plan as drafted by Under Secretary of State Cordell Hull, a devout Wilsonian, "was in essence nothing more than the League of Nations reborn."<sup>27</sup>

Despite mirroring many of the design defects of the organization it aimed to replace, when the U.N. Charter was finally signed on 26 June 1945, there was no doubt what the primary objective was and still is. Paragraph 1 of Article 1 states the primary objective of the Charter is "to maintain international peace and security."<sup>28</sup> Therefore, all subsequent stated purposes and principles merely strengthen and safeguard the primary purpose of maintaining peace amongst nations.<sup>29</sup> Though relative power still mattered, by signing the treaty, member states forswore the use of force as a legitimate means to force the interests of one state over another. Nevertheless, U.S. military forces have conducted limited warfare operations, somewhere in the world, at some scale, during

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<sup>25</sup> Michael Lind, *The American Way of Strategy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 177-178.

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin V. Cohen, "The United Nations in its Twentieth Year," *International Organization* 20, no. 2 (1966): 205.

<sup>27</sup> Lind, *The American Way of Strategy*, 180.

<sup>28</sup> N. J. Rengger and John Campbell, *Treaties and Alliances of the World*, 6th ed. (London: Cartermill, 1995), 63.

<sup>29</sup> Cohen, "The United Nations in its Twentieth Year," 186.

every year since the end of World War II; sometimes with, but often without U.N. support.

Central to the Charter is the legal organizing principle of nation state sovereignty. Therefore, the U.N. does not seek to govern the actions of nation states but merely aims to provide a democratic political and legal framework, enabling member states to collectively resolve disputes, preserve peace and promote economic and social advancement of all peoples.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, its success depends on the way member states choose to exercise their rights and meet their responsibilities.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, it remains in the interest of the U.N. and world peace for member states to maintain a proportionate balance of military force, whether individually or within collective defense organizations, to deter aggression should a rogue state be tempted to secure interests by war rather than negotiation.

### **Cold War Mobilization – The Conventional Love Affair**

Thus far the chief purpose of our [U.S.] military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose.<sup>32</sup>

Bernard Brodie's above observation, made in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1946, reflected his belief that the prospect of unrestricted nuclear war had fundamentally altered the character of political security strategy. George Kennan's original intent for the "containment" strategy was based on the subjective interpretation of Soviet intention; however, the emphasis changed in National Security Council Report

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<sup>30</sup> Christopher P. M. Waters, "War Law and its Intersections," In *Ethics, Law and Military Operations*, ed. David Whetham (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 95-96.

<sup>31</sup> Cohen, "The United Nations in its Twentieth Year," 191.

<sup>32</sup> Bernard Brodie, "The Weapon - Implications for Military Policy," In *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*, ed. Bernard Brodie (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946), 76.

68 (NSC-68) to a more objective measurement of Soviet capabilities. This shifted the focus from what the Soviet Union *might* do to what they *could* do.<sup>33</sup> In so doing NSC-68 “reduced the complexities of global politics to a mathematical equation, in which Soviet advances anywhere in the world would equate to and be considered a U.S. retreat.”<sup>34</sup>

By assuming the indivisibility of U.S. interests, NSC-68 led to the development of Flexible Response, a symmetrical scientific strategy that required for every Soviet action, an equal and opposite U.S. reaction. However, policy makers were unwilling to accept the politically disabling logic of Massive Retaliation or Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), and therefore sought ways to restore the political utility of force to again “render war a precise political instrument.”<sup>35</sup> Their intent was to disassociate themselves from the absolutist approach of World War II’s strategic bombing campaigns by constructing “a philosophy not only of using limited weapons, but of limiting, controlling, and rationally calculating the very process of making war.”<sup>36</sup>

The resulting policy of Graduated Deterrence aimed to further the political utility of force by offering escalatory military options short of unlimited war and MAD:

By adopting microeconomics, game theory, systems analysis, and other managerial techniques, the Kennedy administration advanced limited war to greater specificity, making it seem much more controllable, manageable and therefore desirable as a foreign policy.<sup>37</sup>

Though politically advantageous, the approach not only ignored Clausewitz’s theory regarding the “logical absurdity” of introducing the principle of moderation into the

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<sup>33</sup> Fred M. Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 142.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>35</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon*, 197.

<sup>37</sup> James William Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2000), 80.

theory of war,<sup>38</sup> but it made military action more readily acceptable rather than something to be avoided at all costs. By placing less emphasis on nuclear weapons the policy also perpetuated and indeed increased the demand for conventional military forces throughout the Cold War period.

The Cold War obscured and diverted attention from the emerging true character of conflict by creating an artificial context under which massed conventional forces were perceived to have continued utility. In order to deter aggression and avoid MAD, both sides<sup>39</sup> were required to convince one another of their ability and willingness to contest another total war. The utility of military capability was therefore predominantly in its deterrence rather than in its application. This underpinning doctrine led to half a century of massive conventional force mobilization which in turn solidified the enduring appeal of interstate industrial war. However, while massed conventional forces faced one another in Europe, similarly trained and equipped military forces were required to fight proxy wars, against different types of enemies employing unconventional tactics in very testing environments. Arguably, these are kinds of conflicts and enemies that are faced most commonly today but rather than focusing on this reality, the physical and cultural legacy of half a century of conventional military mobilization continues to influence and dominate military procurement, force development and training.

### **The Vietnam Syndrome – The Legacy of Social Strategic Shock and Reaffirmation**

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<sup>38</sup> “Kind hearted people might of course think there was some ingenious way to disarm or defeat an enemy without too much bloodshed, and might imagine this is the true goal of the art of war. Pleasant as it sounds, it is a fallacy that must be exposed: war is such a dangerous business that the mistakes which come from kindness are the very worst. The maximum use of force is in no way incompatible with the simultaneous use of intellect. If one side uses force without compunction, undeterred by the bloodshed it involves, while the other side refrains, the first will gain the upper hand. That side will force the other to follow suit; each will drive its opponent toward extremes,... To introduce the principle of moderation into the theory of war itself would always lead to logical absurdity.” Clausewitz, *On War*, 75-76.

<sup>39</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty Organization member states and the Warsaw Pact member states.

## of Overwhelming Force

The disaster in Vietnam was not the result of impersonal forces but a uniquely human failure, the responsibility for which was shared by President Johnson and his principal military and civilian advisors. The failings were many and reinforcing: arrogance, weakness, lying in the pursuit of self-interest, and above all, the abdication of responsibility to the American people.<sup>40</sup>

H R McMaster's above final statement from his book *Dereliction of Duty* offers a scathing and cautionary challenge to future political and military leaders alike. There are alternative and conflicting opinions as to how the world's most powerful and capable military was ultimately defeated by a poorly trained, equipped and technologically inferior enemy but rather than dwelling too specifically on the cause, it is of greater relevance to understand how the Vietnam experience subsequently affected U.S political and military strategy. Indeed, Michael Pearlman controversially argued that "Vietnam was the most divisive - but least important – war in American history" because "defeat did not prevent America from retaining a major military position on the mainland of Asia, enhancing its influence in the Middle East and seeing the collapse of the Soviet Union." With the advantage of hindsight, this is a seemingly reasonable position to take, but of greater interest to this study is his subsequent assertion that "the long-term impact of Vietnam was the intangible loss of confidence, known as the Vietnam Syndrome"<sup>41</sup>

After nearly two centuries of knowing only military victories, the traumatic shock caused by the defeat in Vietnam and the loss of 58,220 service members,<sup>42</sup> affected all elements of American society. Although there is no recognized consensus on the nature,

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<sup>40</sup> H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty : Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 334.

<sup>41</sup> Pearlman, *Warmaking and American Democracy*, 334.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

extent or even precise meaning of the syndrome, it is generally taken to refer to a return to isolationism due to the belief that the American people would no longer support risky foreign interventions.<sup>43</sup> Domestically, the Vietnam Syndrome acted as a constraint on when, where and in particular, how military force could be used as a legitimate tool of U.S. foreign policy.<sup>44</sup> Externally, the consequences were also far reaching as although “American military power remained formidable after Vietnam, its military authority declined precipitously.”<sup>45</sup>

### The Cause

The symptoms relate directly to the perceived failures that led to the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 1973 and the fall of Saigon on 30 Apr 1975. Colonel Harry Summers’ analysis of the lessons of Vietnam resulted in two orthodoxies being established; first, that the support of the American people had ebbed due to a deliberate political decision not to rally public opinion and second, that the military had been prevented from winning due to the imposition from Washington of political constraints on the use of force.<sup>46</sup>

As previously discussed, the Kennedy administration, principally under the control of Secretary McNamara, actively sought to impose almost total political control over the employment of military force. Vietnam therefore, became the testing ground for the new scientific strategy of “graduated deterrence” under the doctrine of “Flexible

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<sup>43</sup> According to Brian Holden Reid, the first reference appeared in either the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*. Brian Holden Reid, "The Influence of the Vietnam Syndrome on the Writing of Civil War History," *RUSI Journal* 147, no. 1 (Feb 2002): 44.

<sup>44</sup> Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service, *'Vietnam Syndrome' Set to Stay* (United Kingdom: Oxford Analytica Ltd, 2003), 1.

<sup>45</sup> Harry G. Jr Summers, "The Vietnam Syndrome and the American People," *Journal of American Culture* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 53.

<sup>46</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 69.

Response.”<sup>47</sup> Following President Kennedy’s assassination, Secretary McNamara continued to drive the strategy under the authority of President Johnson. Though re-establishing the sovereignty of civil authority and policy was understandable following the experiences of the Korea War and the Cuban Missile Crisis, the administration failed to fully consider the importance of the two remaining elements of the Trinity. Indeed, Clausewitz could have been referring to this precise situation when he warned that, “a theory that ignores any one of [the Trinity] or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless.”<sup>48</sup>

Whether factoring the American people out of the strategic equation was due to the difficulty in measuring national will or a deliberate political decision, it was unquestionably one of the most far-reaching mistakes of the Vietnam War.<sup>49</sup> Not only was the fragility of domestic will perilously ignored, but so too was the strength of the North Vietnamese resolve. It perhaps occurred too late to the systems analysts that the North Vietnamese people might have very different levels of motivation towards their cause than the American people and that they might be “more willing to die for it than we [the U.S.] were willing to kill for it.”<sup>50</sup> This points to yet another failing heralded by Clausewitz:

Since war is not an act of senseless passion but is controlled by its political object, the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for it in magnitude and in duration. Once the expenditure of the effort

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

<sup>49</sup> Summers, “The Vietnam Syndrome and the American People,” 53.

<sup>50</sup> Alton Frye, “The American Character and the Formation of US Foreign Policy,” In *American Character and Foreign Policy*, ed. Michael Pollock Hamilton (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 1986), 153.



exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace must follow.<sup>51</sup>

That the military had been prevented from winning due to the imposition of political constraints on the use of force, whilst possibly true, it is perhaps less clear cut. Indeed, McMaster apports considerable blame on the military leadership and its institutional structures. Despite recognizing the flaws in the strategy, he argues that “the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) were unable to articulate effectively either their objections or alternatives.”<sup>52</sup> Whether this was due to inter-Service frictions or simple lack of moral fortitude is a matter of interesting yet largely futile debate. Of greater interest was the relative lack of military preparedness for the hybrid style of warfare being fought. This was in large part due to the steadfastness of the traditional absolutist military culture and the perceived infallibility and reliance on technologically advanced conventional war systems. Though some credible advances in counterinsurgency warfare were made, such as the Combined Action Platoons and the Phoenix Program, the U.S campaign lacked unity of effort due to Military Assistance Command Vietnam’s overwhelming focus on conventional ground maneuver forces supported by expansive use of air power.<sup>53</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that had all the political constraints been removed, the military would merely have persisted along a similar conventional ground and air power strategy. Though Linebacker 2 was certainly much more effective than its predecessor, the hybrid nature of the campaign makes it impossible to discern if an unrestricted approach would have been any more successful. Indeed, greater destruction might not

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<sup>51</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 92.

<sup>52</sup> McMaster, *Derelection of Duty*, 333.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Mockaitis, "Counterinsurgency Doctrine: The US Experience," In *Modern War and the Utility of Force : Challenges, Methods and Strategy*, ed. Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 151.

only have alienated even more of the Vietnamese population, but might also have placed additional strain on the fragile tolerance of the American population watching the war on their televisions.

### The Effect

The political context of the Cold War drove the U.S. Government to devise a strategy that sought to restore the political utility of force in the nuclear age by reasserting the primacy of policy. Policy would not only define the political ends of the state but also control the ways and means of all elements of national power including military force. In itself, this was not an unwise aspiration considering the existential threat of MAD, but overreliance on a rational scientific based strategy ignored the irrational nature of human conflict so prevalent in Clausewitz's understanding of war.

Vietnam, a mere proxy conflict of the broader bi-polar confrontation, failed to restore the political utility of force in the nuclear age and came to symbolize the failure of imprudent political meddling in military affairs. However, the military's continued absolutist culture and singular reliance on the ways and means of the conventional industrial war paradigm, that had also proved inadequate to resolve this new type of irregular hybrid conflict, was significantly understated in the post conflict recriminations. The military approach received very little critical analysis as its failure was determined to be more the direct result of political constraint rather than any other fundamental reasons of design. The lessons learnt from the conflict therefore, if not entirely false, were incomplete and unbalanced. The trust between the civilian and military leaderships was at an all-time low and led a whole generation of military leadership to distrust civilian control, and "to vow never again to be sent into battle without adequate resources, a

winning strategy, the support of the American people and an exit strategy;<sup>54</sup> the founding principles of the doctrine of Overwhelming Force.

### ***Overwhelming Force Doctrine***

In U.S. political discourse ... the horrors of the Vietnam War have been treated not in the obvious terms of tragedy – hubris, retribution and expiation – but as a ‘syndrome’ that had to be got over.<sup>55</sup>

The most far reaching impact of the Vietnam experience was the perception that military force had become obsolete as an instrument of national power, a belief that lingered in the minds of American society for nearly two decades. However, rather than addressing the challenges of Vietnam style wars, the military became markedly more reluctant<sup>56</sup> to recommend military force for anything other than reasons of vital national interest. Vietnam was thus seen as a unique aberration, a memory to be expunged, rather than as an early example of war’s character beyond the era of the inter-state industrial war paradigm. This approach was later enshrined in the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines that placed constraints on the use of military force, further limiting its political utility.

In order to avoid the perceived mistakes of Vietnam, the doctrine of Overwhelming Force equated to a set of criteria to be satisfied for public and congressional support for overseas military intervention to be sustained. In 1984,

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<sup>54</sup> Richard H. Kohn, "Building Trust: Civil-Military Behaviours for Effective National Security," In *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed. Suzanne C. Nielsen and Don M. Snider (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 273.

<sup>55</sup> Philip Windsor, *Strategic Thinking: An Introduction and Farewell* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 181.

<sup>56</sup> “Advising against potential involvement in the Horn of Africa in 1978, in the Persian gulf in 1984, and in Libya in 1986. In the Lebanon intervention, 1982-84, the Department of Defence and the Joint Chiefs also resisted sending any forces to stabilize Beirut, judging such a mission as peripheral to national interest, a view perhaps justified by the early withdrawal of American forces after the tragic bombing of the Marine barracks in which 241 Marines died.” Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 75.

Secretary Casper W Weinberger defined an intervention test based on six conditions that were to be met before the U.S would consider becoming involved:<sup>57</sup>

1. It should be of vital national interest to the U.S and its allies.
2. Intervention should occur wholeheartedly with a clear intention of winning.
3. There must be clearly defined political and military objectives.
4. The relationship between the objectives and the forces must be continually reassessed and adjusted as necessary.
5. There must be a reasonable assurance that the American people and Congress will support the intervention.
6. Commitment of U.S forces should be the last resort.

Weinberger's conditions suited the Cold War context, where the primary purpose of deterrence justified the maintenance of military forces capable of war on a massive or overwhelming scale. They also reaffirmed the logic of Clausewitz's Remarkable Trinity by emphasizing the importance of clearly defined political objectives and constant assessment of the relationship between political ends, military means and the will of the people.

As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell added an additional condition to further re-orient the traditional military culture towards the constraints imposed on the use of force: "should the U.S. intervene, the operation should be short and the force used must be decisive and overwhelming."<sup>58</sup> Powell's Overwhelming Force doctrine codified the orthodox interpretation of Vietnam's lessons and aimed to address the military establishment's growing sense of resentment towards

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<sup>57</sup> Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 309.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

managing high political expectations set against relatively low social tolerances for the realities of war. Admiral William Crowe, Powell's predecessor, provides a concise insight:

Every time I face the problem of having to deploy in third region [sic] – Third World contingencies, instabilities, what the American public wants is for the U.S. military to dominate the situation and to do it quickly, to do it without loss of life, to do it without any peripheral damage, and then not to interrupt what's going on in the U.S. or affect the quality of our own lives.<sup>59</sup>

However, for some policy makers and strategists, the Powell Doctrine excessively constrained political strategy as it constrained policy to the capability of military means rather than political intent. In many ways, Overwhelming Force represented little more than a reconnection to the idealized concept of the traditional American way of war, which many perceived to have been betrayed in Vietnam.<sup>60</sup>

The 1991 Gulf War turned out to be an almost perfect justification of Powell's Overwhelming Force doctrine.<sup>61</sup> However, the restrictive nature of the military objectives that were set in accordance with Powell's doctrine and poor post conflict planning meant that the strategic condition was far from decisive. As a result, security in the region had to be maintained by no-fly zones and other U.N. sanctions and inspections until the second Gulf War in 2003.<sup>62</sup> The war undoubtedly reasserted the authority of U.S. military force externally, but contrary to President George H. W. Bush's prediction that the war "would kick, once and for all, the so-called Vietnam Syndrome,"<sup>63</sup> the

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<sup>59</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 64.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-66.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 273.

<sup>63</sup> President George H. W. Bush, cited in Pearlman, *Warmaking and American Democracy*, 397.

impact of Vietnam continued to influence U.S political and military strategy throughout the 1990s until the 9/11 terrorist attacks replaced it as the defining reference point.

### ***The All-Volunteer Force***

President Nixon's decision in 1973 to replace the draft with an all-volunteer force was certainly motivated by the Vietnam experience and was perhaps a politically astute way "of avoiding the heat of calling to serve those 19-year-olds who would not want to fight the next war."<sup>64</sup> However, the draft was already a dated concept best suited to "desperate struggles and wars of mass mobilization"<sup>65</sup> rather than the limited conflicts of the late twentieth century.

The military supported the all-volunteer force construct as it enabled a much needed professional emphasis, though it was also keen to rebuild the essential link with the American people, as evidenced by Army Chief of Staff General Fred C. Weyland's 1976 statement below:

The American Army really is a people's army in the sense that it belongs to the American people who take a jealous and proprietary interest in its involvement. When the Army is committed the American people are committed. In the final analysis, the American Army is not so much an arm of the Executive branch as an arm of the American people. The Army therefore, cannot be committed lightly.<sup>66</sup>

Army Chief of Staff, General Creighton Abrams, designed the Total Force Structure to ensure active-duty forces could only operate in a major crisis by calling upon certain capabilities from the non-active duty reserve to provide critical support functions. As mobilization of reserves requires presidential proclamation, the intent was to protect the

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<sup>64</sup> Harvey M. Sapolsky and Jeremy Shapiro, "Casualties, Technology, and America's Future Wars," *Parameters* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 124.

<sup>65</sup> E. A. Cohen, "Twilight of the Citizen-Soldier," *Parameters* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 26.

<sup>66</sup> Harry G. Summers Jr, *On Strategy : A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1995), 11.

military from being recklessly or casually committed without popular support.<sup>67</sup> The Total Force Structure thus enabled the military to address a number of internal issues to professionalize the force, to rebuild its links with the American people and to address its shattered reputation.

### *Casualty Aversion*

We had 500 casualties a week when we [the Nixon administration] came into office. America now is not willing to take any casualties. Vietnam produced a whole new attitude.<sup>68</sup>

Henry Kissinger's above quote is but one example of the strong conventional wisdom held amongst civilian, military and media elites that the Vietnam War represented a watershed with regard to U.S. public aversion for casualties in war. Whilst there is little doubt that public support for military operations in Vietnam declined because of the human costs of the war,<sup>69</sup> it is also reasonable to assert that opinion was affected by a number of other factors such as media portrayals of events in Vietnam, the perceived inequality of the draft, the huge economic costs of the war and wider domestic and ethical concerns. However, associating casualty aversion solely with the Vietnam War ignores the broader issue of whether the U.S. has a lower tolerance for casualties relative to other nations. Indeed, as has been discussed previously, the twentieth century American way of war consciously sought "to substitute materiel for manpower in war"<sup>70</sup> to address this very concern. Relative intolerance for casualties in the U.S. "can be largely accounted for by several factors: the strength of American individualism, a

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<sup>67</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 70-71.

<sup>68</sup> Henry Kissinger, cited in Richard A. Lacquement Jr, "The Casualty-Aversion Myth," *Naval War College Review* 57, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 40.

<sup>69</sup> Eric V. Larson, "Ends and Means in the Democratic Conversation: Understanding the Role of Casualties in Support for U.S. Military Operations" (PhD diss., RAND Graduate School, 1996), 33-36.

<sup>70</sup> Sapolsky and Shapiro, "Casualties, Technology, and America's Future Wars," 120.

political system designed to maintain national security with the minimum possible coercion of states and individuals, and the remoteness of foreign wars.”<sup>71</sup>

In *Casualties and Consensus*, building on his previous sophisticated and detailed study<sup>72</sup> into U.S public attitudes to casualties in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Panama, the 1991-92 Gulf War and Somalia, Erik V. Larson concludes that:

The simplest explanation consistent with the data is that support for U.S. military operations and the willingness to tolerate casualties are based upon a sensible weighting of benefits and costs that is influenced heavily by consensus (or its absence) among political leaders.<sup>73</sup>

Contrary to the widely held belief therefore, he found that public support does not respond to casualties alone but reflects a weighing of ends and means that is greatly influenced by events and conditions on the battlefield and by U.S. political leaders in Washington. The emphasis placed on the effect of political consensus and the conditions on the battlefield is revealing, but perhaps not entirely surprising as this is instinctive social human behavior. Though social dynamics, such as consensus amongst political leaders, are important, the most significant factor is the acceptability of costs relative to the perceived value of the political intent. Therefore, much like Clausewitz’s assessment of the inability to calculate strength of will,<sup>74</sup> casualty tolerance similarly does not yield to academic wisdom as it is dependent upon each individual citizen’s personal interest and opinion.

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Lacquement, largely agrees with Larson’s assessment but goes a little further by claiming that American casualty aversion is a “myth” as “the

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<sup>71</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 72.

<sup>72</sup> Eric V. Larson, “Ends and Means in the Democratic Conversation.”

<sup>73</sup> Eric V. Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), xv.

<sup>74</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 184.



public does not require a direct threat to U.S. or allied security or other such vital interests to endorse the use of force” but is instead “motivated by considerations of both realistic national interests and idealistic international aspirations.”<sup>75</sup> Though his “myth” thesis ignores earlier historic reference and may therefore be a little too definitive, his argument correlates well with similar conclusions drawn earlier in this paper. The most insightful element of his work however, is an analysis of the ensuing “negative effects of the casualty-aversion assertion.”<sup>76</sup> Regardless of the degree to which the American people have or have not become increasingly casualty averse, he accurately concludes that the U.S. political elite, and the military establishment in particular, became radically more risk averse as a result of their inaccurate perception of public aversion to casualties. It is this misplaced and excessive concern that is perhaps the true legacy of the Vietnam experience.

The social impact of events and conditions on the battlefield is a relatively modern phenomenon resulting from the advances in media communications. At the beginning of the twentieth century, print media and to a lesser extent cinema, were influential but only within relatively limited portions of society due to poor literacy rates and economic disparity. By the 1960’s however, print media had expanded its circulation and been joined by the more readily accessible mediums of radio and television. General Rupert Smith defines “war amongst the people” as both a graphic description of the physical environment and as a conceptual framework: “It is the reality in which the people in the streets and houses and fields – all the people, anywhere – are the

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<sup>75</sup> Lacquement Jr, *The Casualty-Aversion Myth*, 43.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-50.

battlefield.”<sup>77</sup> Formerly, wars were relatively unknown to the average civilian unless witnessed at first hand but now, in the “Shrinking World,”<sup>78</sup> every conflict interferes with almost everyone’s normal way of life.

The growth of print and broadcast media in particular, has elevated the perceived status and influence of journalists and commentators who are now able to represent and exacerbate popular public opinion without the encumbrance of political authority, accountability or responsibility. During the Vietnam War, the first fully televised war, the U.S. population was witness to, and thus influenced by, the harsh realities of the distant conflict. The media tended to excessively report the more vocal radical elements of the liberalist movement. As a result, the perception of their importance was exaggerated and thus their influence disproportionately affected popular support for the war.

### **The Technological Revolution in Military Affairs – The Shattered Perception and Expectation of Immaculate Destruction**

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 ended the Cold War confrontation. The U.S. became the world’s sole remaining superpower and thus the likelihood of global nuclear conflict and the threat of state-on-state war significantly receded. This new world order allowed for the rapid expansion of globalization<sup>79</sup> and seemingly freed the U.S. of

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<sup>77</sup> Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 3.

<sup>78</sup> The Shrinking World to which Quincy Wright refers is the result of the technological advancement of all forms of global communications, of which media communications is merely a contributing part. Quincy Wright, *A Study of War*, ed. Louise Leonard Wright, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 4.

<sup>79</sup> “Globalization is a spacial phenomenon, a set of processes involving cross-border and intercontinental flows and networks of interaction. In its broadest sense, globalization includes economic, political, military cultural, environmental and criminal dimensions.” Sandra Popiden, “Globalization and Separatist War: An Examination of Commercial Liberalism” (PhD diss., University of California, 2009), 6.

its long standing obligation to sustain large scale conventional forces. However it also created new and difficult foreign policy challenges and choices regarding the use and utility of military force to further U.S. interests.<sup>80</sup>

### The Pacifying Effect of Globalization

The end of the Cold War witnessed a surge in global democratization. It saw the number of electoral democracies around the world rise from 45 in 1970 to more than 120 by the late 1990s.<sup>81</sup> The expansion of democratization was accompanied by a rapid surge in economic interdependence, driven by revolutions in communication, transportation and the liberalization of economic policies. Between 1986 and 1997 the daily volume of foreign exchange trading on the global currency markets increased eightfold to \$1.5 trillion per day and by 2007 the figure had risen to a staggering \$3.2 trillion, equating to “more than the total value of world trade in goods and services each quarter.”<sup>82</sup> External conflict and instability throughout the world therefore, potentially threatens the economic welfare and security of the U.S. and its allies. For example, the U.S. imports over half of its energy needs whilst its allies are even worse off, with foreign oil accounting for more than 60% of Western European requirements and almost all of Japan’s needs.<sup>83</sup>

Economic interdependence and international trade, now more commonly referred to as globalization, has pacific effects on inter-state political conflict. “This logic is based

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<sup>80</sup> Richard N. Haass, "Military Intervention: A Taxonomy of Challenges and Responses," In *The United States and the use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Aspen Strategy Group (Queenstown, Md: Aspen Institute, 1995), 1.

<sup>81</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "The Future of History : Can Liberal Democracy Survive the Decline of the Middle Class?" *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 1 (2012): 53.

<sup>82</sup> Popiden, "Globalization and Separatist War," 7.

<sup>83</sup> Steven R. David, "The Necessity for American Military Intervention in the Post-Cold War World," In *The United States and the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Aspen Strategy Group (Queenstown, Md: Aspen Institute, 1995), 43.

on the premise that when determining whether or not to use force, leaders in interdependent states are likely to reason the economic gains from such relationships and the disruptions associated with war.”<sup>84</sup> However, this view is challenged by some realist and Marxist critics who argue that economic interdependence may have either a negligible or amplifying effect on international conflict.<sup>85</sup> However, most world leaders believe that the expanding economic ties resulting from increased levels of trade and investment, “powerfully cement relationships between nations such that the resort to arms becomes unfathomable.”<sup>86</sup>

Increased levels of economic interdependence has also led to a corresponding rise in the level of collaborative efforts that has “flattened” the globe, reduced the importance of borders and traditional hierarchies and become an important means of conflict prevention.<sup>87</sup> Thomas Barnett, a Pentagon strategist, having mapped the approximately 150 U.S. and international crisis responses to have occurred since the end of the Cold War, found that the dominant threats to international security arise from the failing states that fall outside global economic connectivity and corresponding rule sets. He therefore believes the most effective and cost efficient means of improving international security is to increase the spread of globalization through international trade and private investment.<sup>88</sup> Despite the relative simplicity of his data and lack of alternative ethnic, tribal or social considerations, Barnett presents a compelling argument that is difficult to ignore.

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<sup>84</sup> Popiden, “Globalization and Separatist War,” ix.

<sup>85</sup> Katherine Barbieri and Gerald Schneider, “Globalization and Peace: Assessing New Directions in the Study of Trade and Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 4 (July 1999): 387.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat : The Globalized World in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Penguin Books, 2006).

<sup>88</sup> Thomas P. M. Barnett, “The Pentagon's New Map,” *Esquire*, (March 2003): 227-228.

A number of realists, most notably Samuel Huntington<sup>89</sup> and Robert Kaplan,<sup>90</sup> counter this conventional wisdom by asserting that globalization will merely bring about a resurgence of primordial identities resulting in increased levels of conflict, be they ethnic, religious or civilizational in nature. These excellent works provide an informed insight into the declining influence of states and the re-emergence of traditional tribal and cultural reference points, but do not sufficiently counter the weight of contemporary empirical evidence supporting the pacifying effect of globalization. However, Mark Duffield identifies some of the negative consequential effects of globalization, arguing that “in addition to the anticipated virtuous circles of growth, prosperity, and stability, globalization can also encourage new and durable forms of disparity, instability and complexity.”<sup>91</sup>

These various studies clearly demonstrate that globalization alone is unlikely to guarantee world peace. However, its influence continues to expand and will undoubtedly endure as urbanization and connectivity increases to meet the needs of the rising world population. In many ways, globalization represents a modern paradigm shift of similar consequence to the introduction of the atom bomb in 1945. The means may be very different, but the ways and ends are similar as each provides effective deterrence through the threat of mutually assured destruction. Though the destruction of one is physical and the other is economic, the deterrent effect, in strategic terms is very similar.

### The Increase of Military Intervention

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<sup>89</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993).

<sup>90</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2000).

<sup>91</sup> M. Duffield, "Post-Modern Conflict: Warlords, Post-Adjustment States and Private Protection," *Civil Wars* 1, no. 1 (1998): 65.

Armed Forces in the West are now trained to do anything from delivering babies to delivering nuclear weapons. They are unlikely to be underemployed in the coming century.<sup>92</sup>

The end of the Cold War, booming democratization and rapid economic globalization ushered in a new era of liberal American interventionism. The 1991 Gulf War showcased the capability and technological dominance of the U.S. military. It suggested that the use of force for policy goals was much more feasible, triggering prominent politicians to question the risk-averse culture within the military hierarchy. Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, for example, famously asked General Powell, “what’s the point of having all this superb military that you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?” Consequently, as President Clinton’s Secretary of State, she advocated for a strategy of “coercive diplomacy” through the use of limited force.<sup>93</sup> In so doing, U.S. policy makers failed to appreciate that the very purpose of threatening to use force had changed. Previously the purpose had been deterrence and acceptable external behavior but now it had shifted to compliance and appropriate internal behavior.<sup>94</sup>

The military was divided on the issue as the appeal of more discriminate weapons exercised an ever increasing influence. For example, when the majority of the Joint Chiefs supported General Powell’s caution over American intervention in Bosnia, the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Merrill McPeak, argued that the U.S. could use air power to coerce the Serbs to hold peace talks. He and others,

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<sup>92</sup> Michael Howard, *War in European History* (London; New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

<sup>93</sup> Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Co, 2003), 52.

<sup>94</sup> Charles W. Maynes, "The Limitations of Force," In *The United States and the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Aspen Strategy Group (Queenstown, Md: Aspen Institute, 1995), 19.

including the then Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, General Wesley Clarke, canvassed for the effectiveness of precision technologies as they felt that it was far too restrictive for the world's lone super power to use force only when vital interests were directly threatened.<sup>95</sup> Steven David lent support to this view:

The debate about whether the U.S. ought to be prepared to intervene at all is more a debate about the nature of the U.S. than it is about intervention. ...the extension of U.S. influence – with all its faults – benefits the U.S. and the world community [and therefore] preserving the position of the U.S. as the dominant global power is a pragmatic and moral necessity that cannot be maintained without the ability to intervene militarily in what remains a threatening and unstable world.<sup>96</sup>

Air campaigns, such as Deliberate Force (against the Bosnian Serbs), Infinite Reach (against Osama bin Laden's infrastructure), Desert Fox (against Iraq), Allied Force (against Serbia during Kosovo campaign), appealed to the U.S. tradition of sacrificing machines rather than men. To policy makers, they provided fast, effective and relatively low risk means of coercion for situations that were considered politically important but fell short of vital national interest status. However, the increased use of air power and precision munitions exacerbated political and social expectation regarding force protection and therefore reduced the perceived utility of ground forces, placing even tighter political constraints on the ways and means of military operations.

During the 1990s, the Clinton administration adopted a proactive strategy of "international liberalism - a position of humane global over-watch."<sup>97</sup> However, due to the perceived casualty aversion of the American people, the military leadership remained highly sensitive towards imposed political constraints on the use of force once

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<sup>95</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 80.

<sup>96</sup> David, "The Necessity for American Military Intervention in the Post-Cold War World," 68.

<sup>97</sup> Mary Kaldor, *New & Old Wars* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 27.

deployed.<sup>98</sup> Despite these concerns, President Clinton employed military power more often, in more places, and for more varied purposes than any of his predecessors. “The 1990’s was a decade of unprecedented military activism.”<sup>99</sup>

A huge amount of academic debate relating to the employment of force erupted during this period as military forces were increasingly tasked with missions that they had traditionally not been trained or equipped for.<sup>100</sup> The arguments vary considerably but they all tend towards three central themes: “the political purpose of war, the way wars should be fought and the definition of victory and defeat.”<sup>101</sup> Commentators such as Martin van Creveld,<sup>102</sup> General Rupert Smith,<sup>103</sup> Mary Kaldor<sup>104</sup> and Samuel Huntington<sup>105</sup> broadly agree that the age of interstate industrial war is over, but due to differing interpretations of the character of modern conflict, they disagree on the resulting political utility of military force. However, common to all is the acceptance that military force may not be the most suitable or efficient element of national power to achieve the aims of national policy, but that it will long remain a heavily utilized and essential instrument of national power.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 83.

<sup>99</sup> A. J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen, *War Over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), xi.

<sup>100</sup> Richard N Haass describes the following range of possible military interventions: Deterrent, Preventive, Compellent, Punitive (including counter terrorism), Peacekeeping, War-fighting, Peacemaking, Nation-building, Interdiction, Humanitarian, and Rescue. Haass, “Military Intervention,” 1-18.

<sup>101</sup> Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, *Modern War and the Utility of Force : Challenges, Methods and Strategy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 1-13.

<sup>102</sup> Martin Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War: Lessons of Combat, from the Marne to Iraq* (New York: Presidio Press, 2006).

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *The Utility of Force*.

<sup>104</sup> Kaldor, *New & Old Wars*.

<sup>105</sup> Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”

<sup>106</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Hard Power and Soft Power the Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century* (Carlisle, Pa: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011), 47.



## The Expectation of Immaculate Destruction – A Revolution in Military Affairs?

Operation Allied Force in Kosovo confirmed that U.S. military capability was as dominant at the end of the 1990s as it had been at the beginning with the powerful Gulf War demonstration. However, while the Gulf War had reaffirmed the utility of the traditional American way of war, the Kosovo campaign “extemporized an approach to war that rendered the traditional approach inadequate and potentially obsolete.”<sup>107</sup> For proponents claiming a “Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA),”<sup>108</sup> Operation Allied Force demonstrated changes in warfare comparable to the greatest military transformations of recent centuries.<sup>109</sup> It was touted as the prototype for twenty-first century warfare as it was perceived by many to be “the first truly humanitarian war, the first real war undertaken by the NATO alliance, the first real example of victory achieved through air power alone and the first victory without the loss of a single NATO combat casualty.”<sup>110</sup> However, this rather utopian perspective ignores the significant role played by the Kosovo Liberation Army and does not consider the humanitarian consequences of the President Clinton’s insistence to refrain from committing U.S. ground troops.

Whether Operation Allied Force heralded a paradigmatic RMA or was merely a further technological evolution of the traditional approach is debatable. However, in a similar fashion to the Vietnam Syndrome, it was the perception of change that was the

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<sup>107</sup> Eliot A Cohen, “Kosovo and the New American Way of War,” In *War Over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*, ed. A. J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 45.

<sup>108</sup> The application of new technologies into a significant number of military systems combined with innovative operational concepts and organizational adaptations that fundamentally alters the character and conduct of a conflict. Krepinevich, “Cavalry to Computer,” 30.

<sup>109</sup> Anatol Lieven, “Hubris and Nemesis: Kosovo and the Pattern of Western Military Ascendancy and Defeat,” In *War Over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*, ed. A. J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 97.

<sup>110</sup> James Kurth, “First War of the Global Era: Kosovo and U.S. Grand Strategy,” In *War Over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*, ed. A. J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 63.

most influential legacy. “Immaculate Destruction (as the foreign policy analyst Leslie H. Gelb dubbed it in the early 1990s) promised to render military force an instrument of policy that could be wielded with hitherto unimagined discrimination and control.”<sup>111</sup> It created a belief in American society that war might no longer need to be hell, but potentially immaculate. This notion, however inaccurate, increased public expectation regarding the surgical precision and infallibility of U.S. military force, placing even greater constraints on the conduct of military operations. This expectation, combined with the voiced humanitarian political intent, further suppressed the tolerance for casualties. Concern was no longer limited to U.S. citizens and their allies, as had been the case previously, but extended to foreign civilian casualties, who were no longer readily accepted as unfortunate yet necessary collateral damage.

The second and equally powerful effect was the perceived broader political utility of military force. The irrationality and uncontrollability of the Cold War strategic environment had appeared to render conventional military force obsolete as a rational instrument of policy. However, Immaculate Destruction appeared to offer policy makers the ability to project force with surgical precision, significantly reducing concern for the political controversy of collateral damage or U.S. force casualties. Richard Cooper, a former Director of the Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency, spelt out the underlying cultural calculus: “It’s my view that this society has decided that it will only use a certain fraction of its human effort in its own defense in peacetime. The imperative just isn’t there ... so consequently we have no other alternative but to turn to high technology. That’s it.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 85.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

Donald Rumsfeld, as Secretary of Defense to President George W. Bush, championed the technocratic vision of Immaculate Destruction. He wanted to “change the psychology of how Americans viewed war” by purging the post-Vietnam military culture that the Powell Doctrine had codified.<sup>113</sup> His faith in technological solutions also led him to believe that the military could achieve decisive results with far lighter structures than those he inherited. He considered these to be the result of an excessively conservative and risk-averse military culture. However, by the summer of 2001 Secretary Rumsfeld had failed to impose his vision on an increasingly disaffected military leadership, as Elliot Cohen’s rather timely quote surmises:

To be sure, no way of war is a fixed thing. Under the right set of circumstances leaders and their society may accept very different styles of conflict. But barring some cataclysmic event – a twenty-first century Pearl Harbor – it seems likely that the American way of war will prevail for some time to come.<sup>114</sup>

In the aftermath of 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks (9/11) the strategic imperative changed; the Bush administration had its “twenty-first century Pearl Harbor.”

### The 9/11 Strategic Shock

The military objective is only the means to a political end. Hence the military objective should be governed by the political objective, subject to the basic condition that policy does not demand what is militarily – that, is practically – impossible.<sup>115</sup>

The strategic social shock of the 9/11 attacks hardened the will of the American people and provided the necessary political impetus for the Bush administration to establish the “Office of Force Transformation.” It sought to purge the paradigm of

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<sup>113</sup> Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 26.

<sup>114</sup> Cohen, “Kosovo and the New American Way of War,” 59.

<sup>115</sup> Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd edn. (New York: Praeger, 1967), 351.

Overwhelming Force and to establish Immaculate Destruction as a concept of warfare that relied on the flexible and proactive use of precisely calibrated force to shape the international environment. Public desire to retaliate for the 9/11 attacks pressured policy makers and military leaders to act swiftly and decisively. Operation Enduring Freedom did not disappoint. Though it was not as surgical or indeed as tactically successful as had been hoped, the jubilant media reporting following the fall of Kabul vindicated the civil administration's transformative vision. The success of the operation emboldened policy makers to exert even greater levels of control over the use of force, in a manner similar to that of the Kennedy administration ahead of the Vietnam War.

Operation Enduring Freedom was relatively uncontroversial as it was almost unanimously regarded as a legitimate use of military force in direct retaliation for an unprovoked attack on U.S. soil. Indeed, Secretary Rumsfeld re-employed the "war is hell" argument to counter criticism for Afghan civilian casualties: "We did not start this war. So understand, responsibility for every single casualty in this war, whether they're innocent Afghans or innocent Americans, rests at the feet of Al Qaeda and the Taliban."<sup>116</sup> However, Operation Iraqi Freedom was different due to its pre-emptive intent: "The use of force was conceived not as a symptom of the breakdown of diplomacy but as a preventative instrument to manage the risk of catastrophic threats from arising in the future."<sup>117</sup>

The rapid defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan led many civil policy makers to perceive that technology had rendered the battlefield transparent, predictable, and even humane. Therefore, when planning for the invasion of Iraq, much of the cautionary

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<sup>116</sup> Buley, *The New American Way of War*, 88.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

advice offered by the military leadership was ignored as it was considered to be dated, excessive and overly cautious. Alarmed that the Joint Chiefs' concerns were largely being ignored, Colin Powell, then Secretary of State, cautioned President Bush: "you are about to be the proud owner of 25 million people. ... You will own all their hopes, aspirations and problems. You'll own it all."<sup>118</sup> In many regards Secretary Rumsfeld's and Paul Wolfowitz's hubris mirrored that of Secretary Robert McNamara and others within the Kennedy administration prior to and during the Vietnam War.

Belief in the RMA and the expectation of Immaculate Destruction also changed the perception of victory in war. Rather than considering precise technological capabilities as merely efficient means to expedite the achievement of military objectives, the expectation of surgical precision fostered a belief amongst policy makers that political objectives could be similarly defined. This manifested into the assumption that Saddam Hussein and his regime could be isolated, targeted and removed from the remainder of the Iraq population. The campaign was thus conceived and justified, as a war against the regime rather than the nation of Iraq and its people. In the minds of the policy makers, the people of Iraq were to be the beneficiaries of freedom from oppression and therefore only very limited consideration was given to stabilization and reconstruction efforts.

The risk of this approach was widely recognized at the time. Elizabeth Stanley-Mitchell, writing in the New York Times in April 2003, questioned the logic of regime change. She suggested that the key to winning any war was finding someone willing to surrender: "Someone who recognizes and accepts that the nation that he/she leads has been so defeated that it has ceased to be an independent political entity...and yet retains

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<sup>118</sup> Woodward, Plan of Attack, 272.

the authority to negotiate and build a lasting peace.”<sup>119</sup> She concluded, with remarkable foresight, that the strategy of regime change would result in an operation that “would undoubtedly take years, cost billions of dollars and require the long-term deployment of thousands of occupation troops.”<sup>120</sup> There is very little to question in her assertions as much of her hypothesis has been borne out in the history of the campaign.

By ignoring the enduring nature of war, the Bush administration’s perception of the political utility of Immaculate Destruction drove them to believe that military means alone could deliver the political aim. This is at odds with Clausewitz’s assertion that “the political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.”<sup>121</sup> This point is further reinforced by General Rupert Smith:

It must never be forgotten that the political considerations provide the context within which the strategy rests. ... At the same time, it must always be remembered that the political objective and the military strategic objective are not the same, and are never the same: the military strategic objective is achieved by military force whilst the political objective is achieved as a result of the military success.<sup>122</sup>

There is a vast and growing body of literature dedicated to the assessed failings of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom but only history will truly reflect the strategic impact, whether positive or negative. In each case however, rapid and decisive military success did not readily translate into strategic political success. Much like Vietnam therefore, both campaigns devolved into indecisive protracted counterinsurgency campaigns that became increasingly constrained by the exhausted tolerance of national will. Therefore, one could rightly contend that the political utility of

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<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth Stanley-Mitchell, "No Peace without Surrender," *New York Times*, Apr 8 2003.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 87.

<sup>122</sup> Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 12.

military force was limited by the imposition of constraints resulting from the intolerance of the American people. However, the true cause, as it was in Vietnam, Lebanon, and virtually every other unsatisfactory military campaign since the end of the Cold War, was exaggerated perception and imprudent expectation. Historic experience has exaggerated perceptions of the fragility of U.S. public resolve and thus shaped the military to operate in ways that attempt to control the very nature of war. In turn, imprudent expectation of its ability to do so has encouraged policy makers to use military force to pursue political ends in ways that are so constrained as to be militarily impossible.

## CONCLUSION

Reflecting the special nature of war's means relative to its political utility, Clausewitz believed that the introduction of "moderation into the theory of war itself, would always lead to logical absurdity."<sup>1</sup> However, this paper has demonstrated that the influence of historic social, political and military experience has exaggerated perceptions of the fragility of American resolve and thus shaped the United States (U.S.) military to operate in ways that attempt to control the very nature of war. As a result, military force is losing its political utility due to the imposition of "logically absurd" constraints resulting from the held liberal values and associated tolerances of U.S. society.

The foundations on which U.S strategy is formulated highlighted the inherent political tensions that influence the formulation of policy. Samuel P Huntington questioned whether the U.S. could sustain and preserve an appropriate military to fulfill the societal imperative and yet at the same time be militarily effective, fulfilling what he called the functional imperative. However U.S. political discourse, whether liberalist or realist, is unified by the desire to seek the advancement and protection of the American way of life and the liberal republican values that underpin it. In virtually all of America's foreign wars, as well as the American Civil War, U.S. service men and women have been driven to fight, and die, not for mere objective material gain but for the freedom and liberty of their fellow U.S. citizens to pursue the American way of life.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the strength of moral justification rather than political ideology or material interest is more

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<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 76.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Lind, *The American Way of Strategy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3-4.



likely to dictate the acceptability, suitability and feasibility of any given national strategy. In turn, this will inform the way military force is employed and potentially affect its utility as a means to impose the nation's political ends.

The presumed security provided by America's unique physical and geopolitical isolation facilitated a growth in American Exceptionalism. Belief in the inherent pacifism of republican values and the sense of being a nation uniquely set apart physically and philosophically, permitted Americans to transfer the moral responsibility for the horrors of war onto the perceived unprovoked aggression of the enemy and thus to legitimize waging war at the highest possible intensity in order to finish it as quickly as possible. This inherent sense of moral justification is central to understanding how Americans perceive the use of military force today; as evidenced by Secretary Rumsfeld's comments in 2001 when countering criticism for Afghan civilian casualties. The implication of this moral justification, relative to civil-military relations, was the development of a military culture that considered war to be a failure of policy, rather than its extension by other means. The ambiguity and compromise of politics was determined to serve no purpose other than to constrain the perceived greater moral obligation of the military commander to achieve total unconditional victory as efficiently and as rapidly as possible. The conduct of war was therefore taken to be the realm of the military professional alone.

The two World Wars heavily influenced and advanced the American way of war by leveraging U.S. industrial and technological advantage to increase military capability and reduce the risks to deployed forces. However, they did not fundamentally alter the apolitical nature or absolutist character of the way America conducted war. Indeed, the

experience of World War II merely advanced the means of war and in so doing cemented the absolutist mindset that also dominated the Cold War period.

The Cold War obscured and diverted attention from the emerging true character of conflict by creating an artificial context under which massed conventional forces were perceived to have continued utility. The confrontation required each side to convince one another of their willingness to contest another total war and thus deter aggression and avoid MAD. This underpinning doctrine led to half a century of massive conventional force mobilization which in turn solidified the enduring appeal of interstate industrial war. The physical and cultural legacy of which, continues to influence and dominate military procurement, force development and training to this day.

The political context of the Cold War drove the U.S. Government to devise a strategy that sought to restore the political utility of force in the nuclear age by reasserting the primacy of policy. The intent was for policy to not only define the political ends of the state but also control the ways and means of all elements of national power including military force. In itself, this was not an unwise aspiration considering the existential threat of mutually assured destruction (MAD), but the Vietnam War, a mere proxy conflict of the broader bi-polar confrontation, came to symbolize the failure of imprudent political meddling in military affairs and failed to restore the political utility of force in the nuclear age.

The Vietnam War also represented a watershed with regard to U.S. public aversion for casualties in war. Whilst there is little doubt that public support for military operations in Vietnam declined because of the human costs of the war,<sup>3</sup> it is also

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<sup>3</sup> Eric V. Larson, "Ends and Means in the Democratic Conversation: Understanding the Role of Casualties in Support for U.S. Military Operations" (PhD diss., RAND Graduate School, 1996), 33-36.

reasonable to assert that opinion was affected by a number of other factors such as media portrayals of events in Vietnam, the perceived inequality of the draft, the huge economic costs of the war and wider domestic and ethical concerns. However, associating casualty aversion solely with the Vietnam War ignores the broader issue of whether the U.S. has a lower tolerance for casualties generally, relative to other nations. However, regardless of the degree to which the American people did or did not become increasingly casualty averse as a result of the Vietnam experience, the U.S. political elite and the military establishment in particular, certainly became radically more risk averse as a result of their perception of public aversion to casualties. This misplaced and possibly excessive concern is therefore perhaps the true legacy of the Vietnam War.

It would be very difficult to overstate the social and political impact of the Vietnam War. It continued to influence U.S political and military strategy throughout the 1990s until the 9/11 terrorist attacks replaced it as the defining socio-political reference point. Though most commonly associated with casualty aversion, the most far reaching impact of the Vietnam experience was the perception that military force had become obsolete as an instrument of national power, a belief that lingered in the minds of American society for nearly two decades. However, rather than addressing the challenges of Vietnam style wars, the military became markedly more reluctant to recommend military force for anything other than reasons of vital national interest. Vietnam was thus seen as a unique aberration, a memory to be expunged, rather than as an early example of war's character beyond the era of the inter-state industrial war paradigm. The resulting Weinberger and Powell Doctrines placed stringent constraints on the use of military force further limiting its political utility.

Despite the apparent vindication of Powell's "Overwhelming Force" doctrine following the 1991 Gulf War, many policy makers still considered the approach far too restrictive for the post-Cold War era. However, the political desire for humanitarian intervention and coercive diplomacy combined with rapidly advancing military technology heralded the development of Immaculate Destruction. For proponents claiming a "Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)", Operation Allied Force demonstrated changes in warfare comparable to the greatest military transformations of recent centuries,<sup>4</sup> for others it was merely a further evolution of the traditional approach. However, in a similar fashion to the Vietnam Syndrome, it was the perception of change that was the most influential legacy. It created a belief in American society that war might no longer need to be hell, but could potentially be immaculate. This notion, however inaccurate, increased public expectation regarding the surgical precision and infallibility of U.S. military force, placing even greater constraints on the conduct of military operations in war. However, it appeared to offer policy makers the ability to project force with hitherto unimagined discrimination and control, significantly reducing concern for the controversy of collateral damage or U.S. force casualties.

The strategic social shock of the 9/11 attacks provided the necessary political impetus to establish Immaculate Destruction as the favored concept of warfare to shape the international environment.<sup>5</sup> The evolved cultural myopic U.S. desire for rapid and decisive victory combined with the expectation of surgical precision, fostered a belief amongst the political leadership that military means rather than military ends could

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<sup>4</sup> Anatol Lieven, "Hubris and Nemesis: Kosovo and the Pattern of Western Military Ascendancy and Defeat," In *War Over Kosovo: Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*, ed. A. J. Bacevich and Eliot A. Cohen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 97.

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Buley, *The New American Way of War: Military Culture and the Political Utility of Force* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 97.

deliver the political objective. However, this distracted attention from the enduring human nature of war and much like the Vietnam War, Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom devolved into protracted counterinsurgency campaigns that rather unsurprisingly, strained the tolerance of national will.

It is however, insufficient to simply blame the military for poor execution, or the political leadership for demanding what was perhaps militarily impossible, or even the American people for liberal intolerance and lack of resolve, as this ignores the critical message of Clausewitz's Trinity. The importance of the Trinity's three tendencies is not their identification nor their embodiment, but their dynamic relationship to one another.<sup>6</sup> In these terms therefore, one can appropriately reason that the U.S.'s historic evolution has fostered an exaggerated perception of the fragility of U.S. public resolve. This concern has consequently shaped the military to operate in ways that attempted to control the very nature of war. In turn, imprudent expectation of its ability to do so encouraged policy makers to use military force to pursue political ends in ways that were so constrained as to be "logically absurd." However, greater understanding and consideration of the limitations and consequences resulting from this dynamic relationship will temper expectation and ensure that future demands of policy are socially and militarily acceptable, suitable and feasible.

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<sup>6</sup> "These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless. *Our task therefore is to develop a theory that maintains a balance between these three tendencies, like an object suspended between three magnets.*" Clausewitz, On War, 89.

## **POSTSCRIPT**

This paper offers a retrospective explanation for some of the constraints under which military force operates today. However, it may not be physically possible or indeed politically desirable to change the constraints under which military force currently operates. Therefore, for the military to remain a credible means to compel United States (U.S.) political will, subsequent work is required to determine the function, and thus the political utility of military force in the post-industrial age. World order has evolved from the power politics of the industrial age into a diverse global community of interconnected states pursuing mutually beneficial economic and social ends. Globalization continues to expand and will undoubtedly endure as urbanization increases to meet the needs of the rising world population. Although significant inequalities exist, the balance of power within the globalized framework of nations rests with states that have more to lose than they have to gain through waging war. Therefore, globalization arguably represents a modern paradigm shift of similar consequence to the introduction of the atom bomb in 1945. The means may be very different, but the ways and ends are similar in terms of how each provides effective deterrence through the threat of mutually assured destruction. Though the destruction of one is physical and the other is economic, the effect, and thus the power to deter conflict, in strategic terms, is very similar.

For nations within globalization's influence therefore, the common function of force today, is less a means of achieving or defending a position of physical dominance, but more a means to preserve and secure the functionality of the global network. Thomas Barnett argued that the dominant threats to international security arise from "non-

integrating” countries or transnational cultures that remain outside globalization’s functioning “core” and thus beyond the influence of its corresponding rule sets.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, it is reasonable to surmise that the greater utility of U.S. conventional military force today is its ability to defend the global network from rogue states or non-state actors rather than its ability to deter peer competitor states.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas P. M. Barnett, "The Pentagon's New Map," *Esquire*, (March 2003): 227-228.

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## VITA

Lt Col Mark C. P. Ellwood MBE holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Science from Harper Adams Agricultural College, Shropshire, England. In 1999, he commissioned from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst into The 22<sup>nd</sup> (Cheshire) Regiment<sup>1</sup>. As a platoon commander, he deployed on active duty in Cyprus in 2000 and Northern Ireland in 2002. He then deployed to Iraq in 2003 as a civil affairs tactical support team commander and again in 2004 as an infantry company operations officer. In 2005, he completed a further tour in Northern Ireland as the Battalion Adjutant. Following promotion to major, he completed intermediate staff training in 2007 and was appointed Military Assist to the Director General of Personnel in Headquarters Land Forces. In 2010, he deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan as a rifle company commander with 40 Commando, Royal Marines. In 2010 he was appointed a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Most recently he served as the lead G3 Operations officer in Headquarters 3<sup>rd</sup> (United Kingdom) Division.

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<sup>1</sup> Re-titled The Mercian Regiment in 2007.